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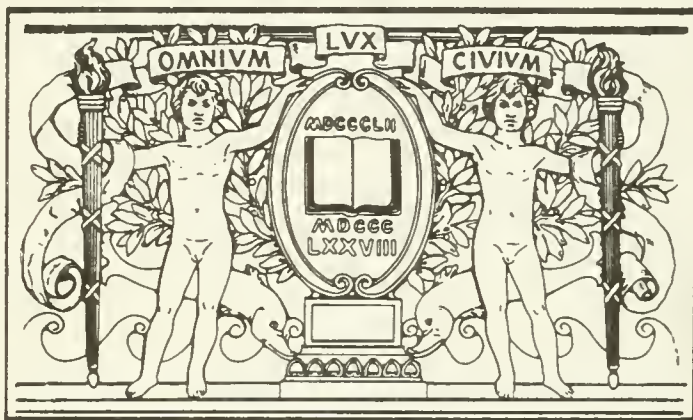
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ROUND-ROBIN SERIES

Homoselle



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HOMOSELLE.

CHAPTER I.

A BLUNDERING ENGLISHMAN.

IT was summer-time under our old *régime*,—a breezy day in June, with a cloudless sky overhead, and the air full of blossomy odors and rustling, twittering music. Several persons were collected before a kitchen-door on a Southern farm known by the name of Dunmore. The centre of attraction was a primitive charcoal brazier, surmounted by a huge preserving-kettle, in which were heaps of luscious red strawberries. The air was heavy with the rich perfume of the fruit, simmering slowly over the glowing coals; and this perfume, floating away into space, had attracted numerous companies of bees that hummed and buzzed and sipped, here and there, as they got a chance. It had also attracted a dark little cloud of negro-children, in the least possible amount of clothing, who hovered in the neighborhood, kicking up their heels and sniffing the air. The woman who presided over the preserving-kettle was stout, middle-

aged, and coffee-colored. She was seated in a low chair made of white-oak splits, and wore a blue cotton dress, and a brilliant plaid kerchief as a coif. Her badge of office was a long iron spoon, with which she skimmed from time to time the impurities that rose from the sugar and fruit to the surface of the bubbling sirup. Standing by her side was a mulatto-girl, likewise in a blue cotton dress, but with a liberal display of bare arms and legs, who, with a feathery branch of asparagus, kept off the bees and flies. But this occupation was varied by frequent skirmishes with a young gentleman of tender years, who hung about the preserves with all the persistency, and more than the troublesomeness, of the bees. Dozing in the sunshine, in a broad patch of light just beyond the shadow of the kitchen walls, lay a white setter, moving his fringed, liver-colored ears uneasily because of the flies.

The person who in turn presided over all these was a tall, slender girl, with a pale face and a pair of large, expressive eyes, — peculiar eyes, the centre of the iris being clear, pale blue, while the outer edges were dark and radiating, which, with their long lashes, gave them the appearance of blue fringed flowers. She was sitting by a large basket filled with a fresh supply of strawberries awaiting their turn to be preserved, from which she was removing the stems; and her fingers were dyed a lovely red. The skirt of her light summer dress was turned up and pinned round the waist; and her short white petticoat revealed glimpses of slender ankles and a pair of small, stout shoes. She

wore a long sunbonnet, and it was like looking down a well to get a peep at her face.

"Cinthy, I think they are done now," she said suddenly, taking a long straw, and poking it into the kettle like a divining-rod, by which mysterious process the condition of the fruit was tested. "By the smell I should think they were a little overdone. Quick! Take them off!"

"Whar dat yaller imp Chloe?" responded Cinthy, rising slowly, and looking round for her attendant with the fly-brush. "She know it take two to git dis kittle off de fiah. Here, gal," she cried to Chloe, who, with a broad grin, was returning from a pitched battle with the boy Skip. "Why can't you let white folks' childun 'lone? Ef you want to wrastle, wrastle wid de niggers," she continued, grumbling, as, with the girl's assistance, the preserves were taken from the fire. "I tell you ev'ry day to let Mars Skip 'lone. Too much freedery breeds despisery, gal."

"La! Mars Skip come ticklin' my ear wid a switch, and you think I ain't goin' to take it 'way from him? No, *ma'am*," said Chloe, breaking up a willow wand in triumph, and throwing it away.

Here Cinthy, about to resume her seat, incautiously placed her plump black hand on the back of a chair where a little wanton bee was idly sipping sweets from a drop of sirup. He made his presence quickly felt by a sting, and then flew airily out of sight. Cinthy howled with rage and pain; and, as the real culprit had made his escape, by way of giving vent to her feelings she aimed a blow at Chloe's head with the

iron spoon. But that young person dodged the blow, and began tittering behind her fly-brush. Skip rolled over in the grass, screaming with laughter; Dash roused himself from his slumbers with a short, snapping bark; while the group of lightly clad young negroes scampered off pell-mell, to hide their delight at Cinthy's discomfiture.

The young lady with the blue eyes, who had been bending over the steaming preserves, looked up hastily to discover the cause of the commotion.

"What on earth is the matter, Cinthy?" she asked, pushing back the long bonnet from her scorched face, and wondering why the woman should be dancing about and wringing her hands in that absurd manner.

"O Miss Ulla! dem bees, and dat yaller imp Chloe! She ain't no use at all, shakin' dat sparrow-grass bush, and pertendin' to keep off de bees."

At this inauspicious moment two new persons appeared on the scene. A lady in fresh crisp muslin, a coquettish broad-brimmed hat, and delicate gloves, came tripping over the grass in the direction of the group before the kitchen. By her side a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow strode with those long, plunging steps that make an Englishman's walk appear an altogether different action from that of an American. He carried a stout walking-stick, but apparently not for use; for he held it horizontally, and it swayed lightly back and forth with the motion of his body. He had a glass in his eye, and looked about him with the air of a conscientious sight-seer, resolved to lose none of the characteristics of the country. He seemed to

be an appreciative observer, and, if one could judge by the expression of his face, keenly alive to the enjoyable features of his surroundings. An exclamation of pleasure escaped him as he came within range of the odors floating from Cinthy's preserving-kettle.

"Ha! Cooking? Do you cook flowers here, Miss Despard?" he asked, inhaling the fragrance with frank enjoyment.

"I am sure I don't know," answered his companion with high-bred ignorance, as she led him to the place where Cinthy was still groaning over her sting. "But we can investigate. Homoselle!"

Thus addressed, the owner of the blue eyes turned quickly, and saw with consternation that Miss Despard was accompanied by a stranger, a gentleman too, and an exceedingly good-looking one, who regarded her with smiling eyes as she flushed and frowned and held out her hands deprecatingly. "Homoselle," repeated Miss Despard coolly, without noticing these signs of distress, "here is the major's English friend, Mr. Halsey. — Mr. Halsey, my niece, Miss Homoselle Despard."

Homoselle bowed stiffly in acknowledgment of the stranger's salutation.

"Don't you think, Bertie," she said with some impatience, as she lowered the skirt of her dress, "Mr. Halsey would have preferred making my acquaintance in the drawing-room?"

"Not at all," said Miss Despard: "Mr. Halsey is an intelligent foreigner, taking notes on the products of our country, and the manners and customs of our people."

While these words were being spoken, the stranger was rapidly taking in the details of the scene, not only as an intelligent foreigner, but with sentiments he would have found difficulty in expressing.

It is probable he noted them in his memory as an artistic view of the situation. Certain it is, his eye was pleased with the grouping of the picture; and he enjoyed, with more senses than one, the fragrant heap of ripe red fruit. But he was conscious, also, of an undercurrent of feeling deeper than mere artistic interest in what, to him, was a perfectly new variety of life. Cinthy's plump, brown countenance, smoothed into propriety by the appearance of the new-comers; Chloe's yellow-skinned face, in which the characteristics of two races were blended; the black fringe of arms and legs belonging to the scampering little negroes; and in the midst, rising like some fair flower above them all, the tall, slender figure of the girl his companion called Homoselle, — combined to make an impression which can scarcely be realized by one to whom such scenes are familiar. "If Mr. Halsey is taking notes," said Homoselle with a half-smile at the humor of the situation and the stranger's perfectly unembarrassed manner, "I hope he will not put me down until I have changed my dress and washed my hands."

"If you will excuse me," said the gentleman, "I think I shall put you down just as you are, fingers and all, and call my sketch Aurora."

"And why Aurora?"

"Why, wasn't she the mythological girl with rosy fingers who represented the dawn?"

"Please don't explain, Mr. Halsey," said Miss Despard. "It is like breaking a butterfly to interpret a joke or a sentiment to Homoselle. She is the most matter-of-fact person alive."

Halsey smiled. "What splendid strawberries you have!" he said, changing the subject. "It gives one quite an appetite to look at them."

"You shall have some at dessert, with cream."

"Thanks: I don't deserve them, for having given so broad a hint. But my admiration is not confined to your strawberries. The climate seems perfection to me. This blue sky and clear atmosphere make a Paradise for a man whose lungs have been suffering from a climate of eternal fog and rain."

"Unfortunately it is not always so pleasant here. We often have weather warm enough to suggest another climate than Paradise," said Miss Despard, surveying the preserves distantly through her eye-glasses.

"You don't like this kind of thing?" asked Halsey, laughing.

"What? Preserves? Oh, yes! I like them to eat."

"Ah! but I like their manufacture," said the gentleman enthusiastically. "This is the prettiest picture of Southern life I have yet seen. Even that old-fashioned brazier and the copper kettle are charming."

During this speech Miss Despard's short-sighted eyes were occupied in studying her gloves, a trick of hers when she was not interested. It was curious to observe how long and closely she could scrutinize what must have been perfectly familiar in every detail.

Halsey turned to Homoselle for sympathy in his light-hearted enjoyment of the new scene.

Her countenance looked responsive, and he went on :
“ I will have that old woman in the gay turban to sit for her portrait some day ; and the beautiful mulatto looks like a copy of Miss Homoselle done in bronze. Don't you see the likeness, Miss Despard ? ”

Bertie was startled out of the contemplation of her gloves by this question. She looked at Halsey with raised eyebrows and a haughty smile, but she did not reply.

Homoselle's eyes appeared black as she shot a swift, reproachful glance into his innocent, wondering face. He colored and stammered ; but, even as he winced, he felt that he would like to see her eyes flash again.

The boy Skip, who was returning from the chase and capture of what he called a June-bug, — which unhappy insect he had tied by the leg with a string, and was whirling round his head for the sake of its plaintive, humming song, — dashed into the circle in time to witness the peculiar expression that had fallen on the faces of the party.

“ Whew ! ” he whistled, “ Homo's mad. She looks just that way when she catches me in a whopper. Has Chloe or anybody been misbehavin' ? ”

Bertie was the first to recover from the little shock caused by Halsey's speech.

“ Do, Skip, stop your noise,” she said. “ Come, Mr. Halsey, and I will show you the tobacco-fields you wished to see.” As they walked away she asked, “ How long have you been in this country ? ”

“ Just three days,” he answered, pulling viciously at his moustache.

"I thought so. You have not had time to learn the *bienséances* of our peculiar society."

"What *have* I done?" he asked in an eager, penitent voice. "I know I have made a blunder. I recognize the signs but too well. All my life, like a true Englishman, I have been blundering into things; and, if I had not the luck sometimes to blunder out, I should be a miserable fellow."

"You have not done any thing so dreadful, for a foreigner, after all. Only offended one of our race prejudices."

"But the girl is beautiful," he exclaimed with warmth.

"Is she? I had not thought about it. But she is also a negress."

"Only partially so."

"Oh!" said Miss Despard with heightened color, "we will not discuss that question. But in England you perfectly well understand the prejudices of caste; and here you must learn to understand the prejudices of caste and race combined."

"Thank you for my first lesson," said Halsey, not very humbly; for he was smarting under a sense of injustice, and, like most persons, inclined to think everybody's prejudices unreasonable but his own.

"If you were to tell an English duchess she resembled one of her servants, she would be offended at being compared to a person of such inferior rank. Think how much greater her indignation would be if the servant was also of inferior race," said Bertie, in her loftiest manner.

"You are right. I see I have made a terrible blunder. But I lost sight of conventionalities in my thorough enjoyment of every thing. To tell you the truth, I did not expect to find you so hampered by verbal etiquette on this side of the water. But in making comparisons between the women of the two countries, do American ladies always put themselves on a plane with English duchesses?"

"Of course, *I* do."

"Of course," said Halsey with courteous gravity, as he gave his companion a sidelong glance to contemplate anew the proprietor of so much importance. "But I have supposed from your books and papers that *all* Americans were on a social level with our highest aristocracy. Now, you know, in England we have very few dukes and duchesses. I haven't the honor of being personally acquainted with one. I asked the question because I was going to tell you of a cousin of mine, who, though not a duchess, is an exceedingly nice person. She did not at all object to being considered like one of her maids who was very pretty. We tried to tease her about the resemblance, but we found she liked it. Somehow I fancied most women felt the same about such things."

The stealthy scrutiny Halsey made of his acquaintance of an hour only confirmed his first impression of her. She was a tiny creature, delicately made, with pretty hands and feet. Her complexion was rather inclined to be sallow, but her dark, vivacious eyes and brilliant teeth compensated for want of color. A small, decidedly turned-up nose did not detract from the piqu-

uancy of her face, but gave a satirical touch to the lofty carriage of her head. On this occasion she was freshly, even prettily dressed, but with a negligence of details that indicated characteristic want of care ; while some grains of white powder lurking in her dark brows and lashes betrayed the means she had used to improve her complexion. She spoke rapidly in a sweet, thin voice which was almost childish in its clear treble, and so emphatically as to give an air of importance to every thing she said. When she was not talking herself, she was busily engaged in eying, with near-sighted proximity, her dress, her hands, her buttons, any thing, in fact, of her own that came within range of her vision.

“What a top-loftical little creature it is !” thought the young man as he withdrew his eyes from her face, and looked round on the smiling landscape.

“Suppose we don’t go to the tobacco-fields to-day,” she said with a sudden change of mood, pausing before a rustic seat, under the shade of a wide-spreading locust whose clusters of pendent white bloom filled the air with honey-like fragrance. “The sun is getting warm, and I have on slippers : it will be uncomfortable overhead and under foot. You will have plenty of opportunities to see all our crops. Let us sit here.”

“With all my heart : this is the very day and hour to do nothing but enjoy one’s self,” answered Halsey, taking his seat beside her.

A fine view of the house was had from the bench where they placed themselves. It was a long, low

structure, built of brick imported from England in the colonial days; brick not comparable to our own in fineness and smoothness of grain, but greatly superior in color. Its nondescript gray tone made a charming point of relief amid the sun-bright hues of the surrounding landscape. The plan of the house was the simple one almost universal among the homes of our colonial ancestors, — a large, square, two-storied building, with a long one-storied wing on either side. It presented quite an imposing appearance, from its evident antiquity and the great length of its front, which more than compensated for its want of height. Here, one felt sure, was the home of an easy, unhurried life, with plenty of room to spread one's self, and no steep flights of stairs to climb. It was situated not more than a quarter of a mile from the river James, which is several miles wide at this point.

In front of the house, a beautiful lawn, dotted here and there with fine old forest-trees, sloped gently down to the road that skirted the water. The humid climate seemed peculiarly favorable to the cultivation of flowers, and the broad walk leading from the house to the river was bordered with plants flowering in richest luxuriance. Fringe-trees, with their trailing white blooms, alternating with trellises embowered in honeysuckle and yellow jessamine, enclosed one of the most charming promenades imaginable.

Halsey and his companion had not been seated long before they became aware that Skip, with Dash at his heels, had followed them, and was standing at a respectful distance, regarding them wistfully.

His face was besmeared with strawberry-juice, and he was barefooted and bareheaded ; but these deficiencies of toilet did not seem to make him unhappy. A pleasant, intelligent-looking lad, for all that he had a freckled face, a wide mouth, and stubborn hair. He eyed Halsey curiously, not half satisfied with that mode of examination ; for Skip, like most children, thought he had not properly seen, until he had also handled. He would have liked to pass his fingers over the rough tweed of Halsey's well-fitting coat, to have touched the snowy cuffs, the watch-chain, the eyeglasses, and even the soft brown beard ; but Halsey's spotless neatness bore a touch-me-not expression, which awed even Skip's adventurous spirit of investigation. One thing only seemed to be within reach of close inspection.

"What is it, my man?" asked Halsey at length, unable to resist the boy's appealing eyes.

"Your stick," answered the child promptly, with his most ingratiating smile.

"My stick? Certainly ; but you will bring it back?"

"Oh, yes !" said Skip, walking off with the cane, in deep contemplation of the beautifully-carved dog's-head which formed the handle.

Dash, meanwhile, after sniffing at the stranger, lay contentedly down at his feet, and watched the boy's movements drowsily, through half-closed eyes.

"Sensible old dog," said Halsey, stroking his head. "You know me for a fellow hunter, don't you?"

Dash lazily wagged his tail in reply.

"Skip is not diffident in society, as you see," remarked Bertie.

"No. Is he your brother?"

"No: he is my nephew. His father, my brother, lives in town; but Skip always spends the summer vacation here. He is turned out to grass when he comes, and allowed to run wild. Like all boys, he is somewhat of a nuisance, and, as he is the only son, horribly spoiled."

"You called your niece Homoselle. May I ask where such a pretty name came from? It is surely not English, but it is as dulcet as a flute."

"It *is* a pretty name; and, strange to say, it is the result of an idiotic fashion we have here in Virginia of calling girls by family names. Homoselle's mother was of Huguenot extraction, — a Miss Homoselle. Luckily for my niece, it has quite a feminine sound. But think of calling a young lady Carter, or Champe! such manly, I might say horsey names!"

"It *is* an odd fashion. I wonder how it came about," said Halsey.

"Ah! I can tell you. We are all so exceedingly well born, and so proud of our families, that we like the world to know not only who were our forefathers, but our foremothers. If there are no boys to dub Champe and Carter, we give the names to the girls. This is especially the case if our mothers happen to be a little more aristocratic than our fathers. We have in this very neighborhood a Miss Champe Tompkins, and a Miss Randolph Jones."

"Homoselle," repeated Halsey softly, returning to the name originally under discussion. "Your niece does not look French."

“Not in the least: nor do I suppose she can feel so. Homoselle is phlegmatic. All trace of her French ancestry is lost except the name, which, as you say, is a pretty one, and has the advantage of being capable of division and subdivision to suit every one’s fancy. Her father calls her Ellie, for so he called her mother. The servants think they are following their master’s example, when they call her something they intend for Ella. Skip calls her Homo, which has a masculine ring about it. I am the only person in the family who gives her the benefit of her whole name.”

“And you are right.”

While Miss Despard and Halsey were exchanging bits of information, which served to make them better acquainted, Skip was exhibiting the cane and its wonderful head to his colored comrades, whose costume surpassed his own in scantiness. When their admiration was exhausted, he began to look about for a new source of amusement.

As Bertie had intimated, he was fond of society, especially that of men, strong, manly-looking men, like the stranger, who had evidently found favor in his eyes. He went back to the place where Halsey and his aunt were seated.

“Well, Skip,” said the young man, “you have brought back the cane all right?”

Skip nodded.

“Ah!” exclaimed Halsey, taking the cane, and dropping it again, “you have given it a liberal supply of preserves. You took it away a stick, and have brought it back sticky.”

This sally Skip found irresistibly funny. He shouted with laughter as only a boy can.

Halsey was by no means displeased with this appreciation on the part of his small interlocutor.

Encouraged by his smile, Skip drew nearer. Miss Despard gathered up her draperies, to prevent their coming in contact with her nephew.

"Go away, Skip! You are getting troublesome," she said.

But Skip was making up his mind to ask a favor he had been thinking of ever since he saw Halsey perform the amazing feat of fixing a glass in his eye, and then, by a sudden elevation of the eyebrow, let it fall again.

"Please," he said insinuatingly.

"Yes," answered Halsey encouragingly.

Please screw your spectacle in your eye, and drop it out again, like you did when you were talkin' to Homo."

Both Halsey and Miss Despard laughed. "Run away, Skip," said the lady again.

"Don't drive him away," interposed Halsey good-humoredly. "Your nephew is putting me through my paces, and I have no objection. — Here goes, my man." He put his glass in his eye, and let it fall again, while Skip looked on with intense interest.

"Won't you let me try?" he asked at length.

"Yes, when you have washed your hands."

"I like you. *I* don't think you are conceited," exclaimed Skip, with a burst of boyish enthusiasm, and with such a decided emphasis on the *I* as to awaken suspicion.

“Who does?” asked Halsey.

“Homo says *she* don’t like you, — that you are one of them conceited Englishmen.”

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOW IN THE LOOKING-GLASS.

HALSEY did not drop down at Dunmore out of the clouds, but found himself there quite naturally in consequence of antecedent circumstances. He had had the good fortune, the winter before, to render very efficient service to an American gentleman, a Major Carter, whom he met travelling in Italy. This Major Carter happened to be the Despards' nearest neighbor, and lived at Westover, the adjoining estate. Halsey, who was supposed by his family to be threatened with some lung trouble which his native air tended to aggravate, had been sent to travel in milder climates. He had been over Southern Europe, and was meditating a tour in the East, when he met Carter, who persuaded him to turn his steps westward. "A young man like you," the major had said, "should be studying the country of the future: when you get old, you can go and meditate over the tombs of the past."

This philosophy, or the warm hospitality with which Carter urged a visit from him, prevailed, and here Halsey was. For the sake of the sea-air he had made the voyage in a sailing-vessel, which rendered the time of his arrival uncertain. When he reached Westover his

host was absent ; but the house had been left open for the expected guest, who found a note commending him to the kindness of the Despards for a few days. Carter being a bachelor, his establishment was not particularly enlivening for a young man in the absence of its master ; and Halsey lost no time in presenting his credentials at Dunmore, where he fell under the soft spell of the easy Southern life as soon as he crossed the threshold. Mr. Despard was in the hall buckling on a pair of spurs when he entered.

He was a man of middle age and medium height, with the sun-embrowned face, and compact, firmly-knit figure that bespeak an active out-of-door life. His countenance was very grave ; but his features were of a high type, and the expression of his clear eyes was singularly attractive and intelligent.

He knew Halsey at once.

"Ah ! you are Carter's English friend," he said with quiet warmth. "No need of this," putting aside Carter's note as he grasped the stranger's hand : "I have been looking for you for several days, and am very glad to see you. Come in here," opening the drawing-room door. "When did you arrive?"

"Two days ago, but I scarcely feel as if I had arrived yet. I seem still to be dancing on the waves."

"Yes. I know that feeling after a voyage. Will you take a glass of sherry, or the wine of the country, Old Bourbon? No? Ah ! here is my sister, Miss Despard. — Bertie, this is Carter's English friend, Mr. Halsey."

"So you have come at last," said Bertie, smiling,

and extending her hand as if to a long-expected friend "Major Carter said we were to make much of you in his absence. Are you prepared to be made much of, Mr. Halsey?"

The young man felt the little cloud of shyness and anxiety which had oppressed his spirits in anticipation of the first meeting with these strangers roll away like mists in the sunshine.

It was not long before he and Miss Despard found themselves sauntering together over the lower floor of the old house, which possessed some points of interest for an Englishman. It had been built by a veritable English earl, Lord Dunmore, one of the early governors of the colony of Virginia, from whom it had derived its name. It was so substantially built, and had so successfully withstood the wear and tear of time and revolution, that Halsey was disposed to be proud of its English origin.

"It is the best house in the county now," Bertie had told him with some exultation, "for all it is so old and weather-stained."

"I can easily believe it. Some of the houses I caught sight of on the way here were so fresh and new as to make my eyes blink."

From the house they wandered to the grounds; and it was at some distance, behind the screen of a vine-covered trellis, that they had come upon Homoselle and her preserves.

"Life seems to be quite idyllic here," said Halsey, his eyes wandering from the venerable house to the still more venerable trees that dotted the lawn, with

glimpses of the river flashing between, and then, far as the eye could reach, fields waving with wheat and corn. "I wonder my friend the major has never married in the midst of all this peace and plenty."

Miss Despard laughed. "Why, Major Carter is a confirmed bachelor."

"You say that in a tone as disapproving as though it were a confirmed drunkard or something equally objectionable," said Halsey with a little feeling.

"I did not imagine that you had taken any vows on the subject," said Bertie, arching her eyebrows.

"Nor have I; but a man's marrying does not always depend upon his own will."

Bertie laughed again. "Pray excuse me. I can't help laughing, for what you have said would seem to imply that you had been crossed in love; and you look so little like a man whose affections had been blighted."

Halsey laughed too. "My looks do not belie me. I have never been the least in love."

A morning visit, however pleasant, must come to an end; and Halsey was amazed to find how time had sped at Dunmore. The sincere regret with which he took leave of his hostess was greatly alleviated by an engagement to return to dinner.

Nothing so disposes a man for the pleasures and refinements of home life as a protracted sea-voyage, and he looked forward to dining with his new friends with keen enjoyment.

About an hour before the time appointed for dinner, Homoselle Despard was lying asleep in her own

room. Sleep had overtaken her. It had been her intention to take not more than ten minutes rest before changing her morning-dress. But the ten minutes had already extended to an hour, and she had not stirred. A breeze from the south, fragrant with the breath of clover-fields and flower-beds, floated in at the window, and played with the loose tendrils of her hair, but did not succeed in moving the long lashes fast closed over her blue eyes.

After a while the door opened softly, and a dark face peeped in ; then a pair of shoulders, and finally Chloe's whole person entered.

A wide open smile spread over her countenance at the sight of her mistress.

"La ! Miss Ulla fast asleep," she chuckled to herself. "Miss Ulla ! Miss Ulla !" she called aloud. But the sleeper did not move. Then she passed her hand gently over Homoselle's feet, with an unmistakable expression of love and admiration in her dark velvety eyes.

"Miss Ulla, time to git ready for dinner."

Chloe's rich but uncultivated voice seemed incapable of producing a fine or acute sound. Her vowels were of the broadest character ; and Ulla was the nearest approach she ever made to pronouncing the pretty name of Ella.

"Miss Ulla, time to dress for dinner," she repeated ; and Homoselle awoke at last with a start.

"Chloe, I have been asleep !"

"Yes, ma'am, dat you is. I come to see 'bout you, 'cos I hear Miss Bertie tell uncle Dick dar was a strange gen'l'man comin' to dinner."

“A strange gentleman ! I dare say it is that Englishman who was here this morning,” said Homoselle ; “and oh, bother ! I suppose I shall have to do my hair all over again.”

“O Miss Ulla ! let me fix yo’ ha’r,” pleaded Chloe.

“Well, be quick about it,” said Homoselle, taking her seat before the mirror, and removing her comb.

It was not often she thus indulged Chloe, and the girl began her task with eager delight. Like many of her race, she possessed a natural talent for arranging hair. Her slender fingers had a firm, light touch, and gentle movement, that made her manipulations a luxury ; and, what was more surprising, she displayed undoubted taste in the grace and simplicity of her handiwork. She liked nothing better than the handling of her young lady’s soft hair, which was of a pale brown color, with threads of a darker hue running through it, like the rich shadings of a ripening nut. As she passed and repassed the comb through its shining lengths, Homoselle looked into the dim, old-fashioned mirror, and caught sight of the girl’s face just above her own. There were the two reflections in juxtaposition ; and, as she glanced from one to the other, a new thought flashed upon her, or, rather, a thought first suggested a few hours before was vividly recalled.

“Why, Chloe !” she exclaimed, — and her surprised resentment betrayed itself in her voice, — “you *are* something like me, after all.”

Chloe laughed. “Well, if I is, Miss Ulla,” she answered, in a honeyed, comforting tone, — for she

knew intuitively what Homoselle felt, — “I ain’t nothin’ mo’ like you than yo’ dark shadder a-follerin’ you round.”

Homoselle blushed. The affectionate humility of the girl’s reply, and the gleam of unconscious poetry expressed in her uncouth negro dialect, touched her. With the quick impulse of a generous nature righting itself after momentary injustice, she began comparing mistress and maid, with rigid severity towards herself. There was certainly a resemblance in feature and general outline, though differing widely in color and expression. Homoselle smiled at her indignation of the morning, as she decided that her own pale, grave countenance, with its thoughtful eyes, and cloud of straight, light hair, looked cold and colorless by Chloe’s golden-brown face, her soft dark eyes, her full red lips, and her glossy black hair rippling up in strong, vigorous waves from brow and temples. But she said nothing as she contemplated the affectionate, laughter-loving slave from a new standpoint. But when the last hairpin had been put in place, and Chloe, in thorough admiration of her own work, exclaimed, —

“Dar now, jest look at dat head, Miss Ulla ! han’s and pins can’t better it,” she answered warmly, —

“Yes, you have outdone yourself to-day, Chloe. By the by, have we cut out your summer clothes yet? I forget.”

“No, ma’am. Aunt Cinthy say she gwine do it to-morrer.”

“Tell her not to touch them until I see her. It is time for your dresses to be made long.”

Chloe looked down at her shapely bare legs with a great smile, that seemed to swallow up her face in a flash of merriment.

“La, Miss Ulla ! is I growed up?”

“Yes : you are as tall as I am ; and that decides me to give my old blue dress to you instead of to Cinthy. Get it out of my wardrobe, and put it on ; and don’t let me see those bare legs again.”

“Thanky, ma’am,” said Chloe, delighted at the prospect of wearing one of her young lady’s dresses.

“But” —

“But what?”

“It will be mighty onconvenient when I runs wid Mars’ Skip and de dog, and when I climbs trees, and gits over fences.”

“I can put long dresses on her,” mused Homoselle, as she went down-stairs to dinner ; “but I shall never be able to make any thing of her but a child.”

When Halsey arrived, a few minutes before the specified hour, he was shown into a darkened parlor, fragrant with the treasured roses and jessamines of many summers. The floor was bare, and so highly polished as to render walking dangerous. With his glass in his eye, he peered into the sweet-scented darkness, and stepped cautiously, as if moving on ice. The first thing he knew, he had stumbled over an ottoman ; and an ugly word was on the tip of his tongue, as he wondered at the stupidity of excluding light and air from a room where human beings lived and breathed.

As he recovered his balance, some one partially

opened a shutter ; and the light that danced joyously in brought an agreeable picture out of the gloom, the pleasant, old-fashioned room he had seen in the morning, and his host coming towards him with a smile ; Miss Despard was putting up her embroidery, in order to bid him welcome ; and behind, quite at the other end of the room, Homoselle was quietly arranging the blinds so as to admit an agreeable degree of light, without the glare of the Southern sun.

“Women have curious fancies,” Mr. Despard was saying ; “and one of the most remarkable is their repugnance to sunshine, and another is their love of footstools. I have a battle about these things every day. But my dominion does not extend to this room. Ellie, come and make Mr. Halsey’s acquaintance.”

“Yes, papa : but we have met before,” said Homoselle, leaving the window, and greeting the stranger with a quiet gravity, from which every trace of the morning’s annoyance had disappeared.

Her deliberate movements, her calm face, and slow, distinct utterance, formed a fine contrast to the bird-like flutter of Miss Despard’s manner. Halsey scarcely knew which to admire more, Bertie’s diminutive figure, and little, piquant face, with its varying expression and flexible eyebrows, or the tall, rather massively-built girl, with the grave countenance and rare, beautiful smile. A strong family likeness existed between Bertie and her brother ; but Homoselle was of another type, inherited probably from the young mother, who died when she was born. Bertie’s impulsive vivacity took the form in her brother of a subdued restlessness,

which betrayed the same temperament. A great deal of this he worked off in riding and hunting; but indoors he had a habit of pacing the floor, often to the discomposure of his sister, who did not like the air to be charged with two electric currents at once. He began walking up and down now.

"Time for dinner, Ellie," he said, with the impatience of a man whose appetite has been whetted by a morning in the saddle.

Homoselle left the room; and the spirit of the "*mauvais quart d'heure*" preceding dinner had begun to settle on the party, when the silence was enlivened by a cool, tinkling sound, that brought a look of contentment to Mr. Despard's face, and even raised bright anticipations in Halsey's unsophisticated mind. Homoselle returned, followed by a servant bearing on a waiter two tall glasses, beaded with coolness, fragrant with mint, and garnished with strawberries. They were equally irresistible to the man who had often slaked his thirst in such cups, and to him who had never seen the like before.

"There, Mr. Halsey," said his host, "if you have never had the pleasure, let me make you acquainted with a mint-julep."

"Thanks. I have never had the pleasure: this is a new, though long-looked-for experience. But is not this a great deal for a beginner?" said Halsey, regarding the tall tumbler with a smile.

"Just try it, and tell me what you think of it."

"Think of it!" exclaimed Halsey, quaffing exhilaration through two senses at once,—the fresh tonic

smell of the mint being quite as effective in its way as the subtle fire that tingled through his veins to the very finger-tips. "I think every thing of it. It seems to possess every good quality, coolness, warmth, sweetness, strength. But these glasses do not hold as much as I thought," he added after a while, gravely contemplating the bottom of his tumbler.

Despard laughed. "Now I know you appreciate a julep. One never thinks a glass holds quite as much as it ought. But you will find it is enough."

"I have never seen a man drink his first julep before," said Bertie.

"The inventor of juleps," began Homoselle, — and, as it was the first remark she had volunteered, Halsey listened with interest, — "like the inventor of the guillotine, is said to have fallen a victim to his own invention."

Her father's eyes twinkled. "Why don't you finish your story, or sermon, Ellie?" he said, with a shrewd smile; "and tell how the poor fellow's grave was kept green by a spontaneous growth of the mint he loved so well?"

Further discussion was interrupted by the entrance of Skip and his dog, the boy's face shining and rosy from a recent scrubbing.

"Come, Skip, you cannot dine with us to-day," said Miss Despard decidedly, pushing him gently towards the door.

The child's bright countenance fell. "Oh, aunt Bert, let me stay! I want to see Mr. Horsely."

"The gentleman's name is Halsey, and he does not wish to see you."

"Horsely is a gooder name ; and I know he likes boys. — Don't you ? "

"Of course I do," said Halsey. "I was a boy once myself."

"A *little* boy?" looking incredulously at the gentleman's Titanic size.

Halsey laughed. It was evident that here was a spoiled child, but he was a real boy, for all that ; and Skip's intuitions were correct, — the young man *liked* boys.

"Be off, you little rascal !" said Mr. Despard. "We are going to dinner."

"O uncle ! let me go too," pleaded the little fellow, while Dash added his entreaties by persistently wagging his tail.

"Not if aunt Bertie says no."

"No : not to-day, young man," said Bertie.

The child's face turned furiously red, but he kept back the rising tears. He ran out of the room, letting fly a Parthian shot, —

"I *hate* aunt Bert, and my pa says her name ought to be spelled with a P."

"Little scamp ! he thinks he is unanswerable when he quotes his father," said Bertie, leading the way to the dining-room.

At dinner Homoselle sat opposite her father, at the head of the table ; and she was evidently the head of the house, in one sense. But Halsey was not long in discovering that to Bertie had fallen the *rôle* of chief speaker. She talked well, brilliantly at times, and had quite a genius for apt quotation. Her brother and

niece, proud of her cleverness, were quite willing that she should represent the family in conversation. Bertie herself never doubted, that, if any thing was to be said, she could say it better than any one else. Mr. Despard, often pre-occupied with harassing cares, was glad to have the burden shifted to such worthy shoulders; and Homoselle, never much of a talker, had fallen into a habit of silence when Bertie was present.

She had little to say during the meal, beyond the ordinary courtesies of the dinner-table; but when she and Bertie rose, to leave the gentlemen to their wine, she paused near her father's chair, and, laying her hand on his shoulder, said playfully, "Don't stay long, papa;" and then her glance rested for a moment on Halsey's face, in mute, unconscious appeal. He felt his whole soul rush to his eyes in reply. Somehow, the unspoken thought that had passed between them brought her nearer to him than all Bertie's sparkling vivacity. Homoselle went away plunged in revery. She rarely left her father at table with a guest without an anxious wish that he would not be detained long; but never before had the thought been understood and answered. She believed implicitly the honest brown eyes, brimming with sympathy. She was not disappointed. After Halsey had finished a single glass of wine, he and Mr. Despard were back in the drawing-room. To reward him, Homoselle gave what she thought the best evidence of her gratitude, by leaving him alone with Bertie, who looked very bewitching in her sheer white dress, fastened at the throat with a cluster of the crimson-flecked flowers known as bleeding-hearts.

Bertie affected these flowers, partly because they were not general favorites (she aimed at originality above all things), and partly, it may be, to indicate that she had no objection to hearts bleeding, if they bled for her. Women have always delighted in symbols as a delicate means of expressing unspoken thoughts.

Homoselle followed her father to a small room adjoining the drawing-room, with a package of newspapers that had accumulated at the country post-office ; and, while he smoked, she culled and read aloud their contents to him. The door between the two rooms, one side of which enclosed a full-length mirror, was left open at an angle that revealed the reflection of the occupants of the smaller apartment to Bertie and her companion. Halsey found his eyes often straying to the picture ; while his thoughts, like those of Wonderland Alice, were occupied with what he saw in the looking-glass, — Mr. Despard's sturdy frame stretched at ease in an old arm-chair, and on a low seat by his side Homoselle, in a filmy dark-blue dress which threw out in beautiful contrast the ivory whiteness of her throat and face, bending over a pile of musty newspapers.

As he rode away that evening, his mind dwelt with curious pertinacity on almost the only two things she had said to him, and those not with her lips, but with her eyes, — the quick, indignant glance of the morning, and the look of gentle entreaty she had given him at dinner.

CHAPTER III.

THE QUESTION THAT WAS ALWAYS CROPPING UP.

WHEN Halsey got back to Westover, he found that Major Carter had returned.

The friends met again with sincere pleasure. The major, for a taciturn, undemonstrative man, was quite effusive in his welcome ; and the warmth of Halsey's greeting was increased by his concern at the change a few short months had wrought in Carter. Some undermining influence, more rapid in its effects than time, had aged his friend, who was more gaunt and hollow-eyed than when he passed the previous winter in Italy. Halsey knew of old that any allusion to his health was distasteful to the major, so he said nothing ; but his face expressed more than he knew, for Carter remarked briefly, —

“Another attack lately, but I shall be better now that you are come. It is a terrible thing to be living all alone.”

Major Carter, a man of about fifty, had in his youth embraced the profession of arms with the enthusiasm of an ardent temperament. He was bred a soldier from boyhood : he said he believed he was born one, and that his first cry was a battle-cry. At any rate, he was devoted to his profession, and had served with

distinction on the frontier and in Mexico. Then, in the full tide of an honorable career, he was stricken with a painful malady, which forced him to resign his position in the army, and with it all his plans and hopes. Instead of the active, hardy life of a soldier, he was condemned henceforth to an existence of sofas and teas, easy travel, gentle horses, and freedom from sudden emotions and excitements. He submitted to the disappointment without complaint, but he became a changed man. The world after this bore a different aspect to him, and he assumed a different aspect to the world.

The major was a man of small stature, but every inch a soldier in appearance. One knew at a glance to what profession he had been bred ; and there was still a gleam of subdued fire in his keen dark eyes.

The evening he got home, he and Halsey sat on the long portico in front of the house, smoking their pipes until the stars came out and the moon rose in her beauty, throwing a veil of enchantment over the silent earth, and the rushing, glancing river.

"Did they treat you well here before I got back?" asked the major.

"Well? Why, your servants nearly killed me with kindness. Six different warm breads at breakfast for solitary me, who gazed at them with helpless amazement. Beefsteak, mutton-chops, ham, eggs, tea, coffee, chocolate, cream ! I tried to eat enough to make an impression, for your cook's sake ; but eat as I would (and you know I am a pretty good trencher-man), when I left the table, one would not have

supposed a mouse had been nibbling at it. My dear major, what *does* become of all the food that is sent untouched from your table?"

The major gave only a grunt of satisfaction in reply. "Did you get your bath all right? I felt uneasy about that. I knew you would bring that confounded green tub along with you to America."

"The morning after I arrived," said Halsey, smiling at the reminiscence, "I was wakened early by a scuffling, scrambling, tittering noise, as if an army of some unknown species of animal had congregated just outside of my door. When I demanded to know the meaning of it, a little black nigger popped in, with about as much clothing on as a man in a ballet, and his face grinning all over. 'Mornin', mas'r,' he said, with so much politeness and with such a deferential inclination of his small black person, I felt quite mortified that my recumbent position prevented my making a suitable return. 'De major say we was to fix yo' barf ebbery mornin', sah!'

"'Come in and fix it, then,' I said, readily falling into his phraseology as the best way of making myself understood, but wondering what a little imp like that could do in the way of filling my tub.

"He opened the door; and I saw, pressing behind, a lot of little darkies, with buckets, pitchers, pans, and every conceivable contrivance for holding water. 'Gad!' I exclaimed. 'A troop cometh!' In the twinkling of an eye, but with much splashing and shuffling and giggling, my tub was sufficiently full, and with such clear, cold water too!

“‘And who are you?’ I asked of the spokesman, with a desire to make friends.

“‘I’s Nafan, and we is de major’s treevers.’

“Nafan I translated into Nathan; but what the deuce he meant by treevers, I could not imagine. I was not obliged to expose my ignorance, however: so I said, ‘Thank you, Nathan. I shall tell your master that you are remarkably good treevers.’”

The major smiled, in the grim fashion which was his nearest approach to a laugh.

“I should have thought,” he said, “a hunter like you would guess he meant retrievers. I gave them that name the last time I went gunning, because they brought home a fine duck my dog had failed to find; and it has stuck to them, because their only occupation is to fetch and carry.”

“Of course,” said Halsey: “I was an idiot, not to have thought of it.”

The major smoked in silence for some time, and then asked, rather abruptly, —

“How do you like my neighbors, the Despards?”

“I never saw nicer people,” said Halsey warmly. “Thanks to you, they received me most cordially, and I have spent a most delightful day with them.”

“I thought you would like them, especially my little favorite Bertie.”

“I liked them all,” said Halsey stoutly.

“Of course: Despard is a capital fellow; and Homoselle seems to be the best of daughters, but I could never get much out of her.”

“Perhaps you never tried,” said Halsey, who had the impression that there was a good deal in her.

"Perhaps so. Did you try?"

"A little," the young man said diffidently, remembering his failure, "but not with brilliant success."

"I thought so. I believe she is overshadowed by Bertie, who is a fine talker, especially in dialogue, I might say monologue. But the little minx has no taste for general conversation, and Homoselle has acquired the habit or art of listening. Now, I am a listener myself, so I like chatterboxes. Nothing amuses me more than Bertie's prattle. Her quotations are immensely edifying. I never know if they are correct, but that makes no difference: they sound fine and instructive."

The major had a dry way of putting things, which often puzzled Halsey. He mused over this unusually long speech of his friend's in silence; and, when he spoke again, his thoughts had apparently taken another turn.

"Excuse me, major, for seeming egotistical; but am I a conceited Englishman?"

The major's eyes twinkled. "N—o," he answered slowly, as though it were a matter requiring consideration, "but I should not be surprised to hear that some one had been calling you so."

"That's just it. Now, why should I be called conceited at sight?"

"Why, in the first place, you are such an absurdly big fellow, you overtop everybody; then, you walk with a swing, and look provokingly well satisfied; and, lastly, you have Englishman written all over you so decidedly as to arouse antagonistic nationality."

"Then," said Halsey, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, "I suppose there is no help for it."

"My dear fellow, it wears off. I have not thought you conceited since the first week of our acquaintance," the major hastened to explain.

Halsey laughed heartily at the confession. He had a thoroughly good-humored, pleasant laugh; and the major pricked up his ears, and took heart of grace at the cheerful, familiar sound. It was better than wine to the broken spirits of the old soldier.

"Halsey, my boy, I am so glad you are here!" he said, with more warmth than was his wont; "so glad to see you looking fresh and strong. I am sure you are all right now. Are you not?"

"All right," answered Halsey cheerily. "The sea-voyage did me an immense amount of good; and this clear, dry atmosphere seems made for my lungs."

They were about to separate for the night, when two dogs, that had been lying half asleep on the portico, started to their feet, with ears erect, and barking vociferously.

The major rose quickly, to discover the cause of the disturbance, while Halsey sought for his eyeglass. The major's keen eye was the first to detect, through the openings of a low hedge that skirted the lawn, a stealthy movement, as of some one trying to get away unperceived.

"Halt!" he cried in a martial, ringing voice that had lost none of its old power; and the figure disappeared in the shadow of the hedge. Followed closely by his dogs, he strode across the lawn, and threw open

the gate leading to the road beyond the hedge ; and there, to his surprise, he found a white man, limping along with slow, uncertain gait, and his face looking very pale in the moonlight.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said the major sternly, “but I expected to find one of my negroes here, coming from the quarters. You are aware, I suppose, that this road leads from my negro-quarters ; and your sneaking movements made me suspect mischief. Will you please tell me who you are, and what business you have on my land at this time of night ?”

“My name is Johnson,” said the man, with a sickly smile, and a feeble attempt to put a bold face on the matter. “I am the tutor at Trenholms. I was only distributing a few tracts among your servants : I hope that was not wrong.”

“Tracts !” thundered the major, “tracts that won’t bear the light of day ! tracts, sir, for people who cannot read ! What do you mean by talking such infernal nonsense to me ?”

“Oh !” said the terror-stricken man deprecatingly, “I was only trying to give them some religious instruction.”

“Religious instruction ! Why, a scoundrel who sneaks about my property in the dark like this doesn’t know the first principles of religion. If you have any plan for the amelioration of my negroes’ condition, why don’t you come like a man to me ? In future, you had better attend to your own business, and leave me to look after mine. Now go ; and, if I catch you on my place again, I’ll shoot you like a dog.”

The terrified man was only too glad to avail himself of the permission to depart, and hurried away as fast as his ill-mated legs could carry him ; while the major with difficulty restrained the dogs from flying at his throat.

Meantime, Halsey, who remained on the portico in some anxiety for his friend, who, he was sure, would be none the better for this excitement, overheard the conversation with mingled feelings. As an Englishman, he detested every thing connected with slavery : but of late he had begun to perceive that it was a complicated question, with something to be said on both sides ; and at this moment, whatever moral sympathy he might have had with the man Johnson, his strong personal feeling was with the major, who now returned slowly to the portico, exhausted from his exertion.

“I am too old, Halsey, to be losing my temper in this way,” he said, with an attempt at jocularitv, as he sank wearily into his chair. “I am like Queen Elizabeth, whose physician said that her majesty’s constitution could not stand more than one fit of passion a day. But this fellow Johnson is a miserable creature. I have heard of his tampering with the negroes in this neighborhood before ; and I wanted to teach him a lesson, as far as mine are concerned.”

“It seems to me, major, that this nigger question is always cropping up,” said Halsey, laughing. “I feel as though I were walking on a powder-magazine. Miss Despard gave me a blowing-up quite as severe in its way as the one Johnson has just received from you.”

“You don’t tell me you have been ventilating your views on our peculiar institution to the Despard?” said the major, with some annoyance.

“No, indeed. I made the most innocent remark imaginable, and was surprised at its effect. I said a remarkably pretty servant-girl looked a little like Miss Homoselle, and” —

“What!” exclaimed the major, leaning his hands on the arms of his chair, and raising himself in utter astonishment, and dropping his words slowly. “You — said — the — mulatto — girl — looked — like — Homoselle!” And then a new thought seemed to strike him; and he sank back in his chair, laughing softly to himself. “Come, Halsey,” he said, “we will go in now. Johnson is a venomous beast, but you are a fine antidote.” And, taking the younger man’s arm, he went into the house; and not long after they separated for the night.

CHAPTER IV.

FINE EAR.

HALSEY was alone in his room, busily engaged in jotting down his first impressions of the New World. He had a way of writing clever articles, and enhancing their value by far cleverer sketches, which in his travels had been very useful in eking out his slender means. He had not been writing long when he was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"Come in," he said in his full, round voice, which was a welcome in itself.

The door opened ; and, to his surprise, Skip, accompanied by Chloe and Dash, entered.

Skip had his hat in one hand, and in the other a card, which he held straight out at arm's length.

Chloe came in with a little bob-courtesy, a bright smile, and a "sarvant, mars'r ;" her manner being the odd mixture of humility and ease which characterized the slaves of gentlefolk. The young man colored at the sight of her beautiful face, and the memory of his unlucky speech.

"Good-mornin', Mr. Horsely," said Skip, advancing, and presenting his card. "I have come to see you. Homo says gentlemen visit with cards, and here's mine. She wrote it for me."

Halsey took the card from the boy, and read, "Mr. Skipwith Despard, Dunmore," written in a free feminine hand.

"I am delighted to see you, Mr. Despard," he said, putting the card away in his desk, and placing a chair for his visitor. "Pray take a seat."

"No. I don't want to sit down. I'd rather look at your things," said Skip, whose eyes had been attracted and riveted by a sketch that lay among others on the table, entitled, "Country Life in Virginia."

The boy could not read the words, but he could understand the picture; and, as he looked, his face continued to brighten until at last he turned to Halsey a countenance beaming with intelligence. "That's us makin' preserves!" he cried in a tone of mingled pleasure and astonishment.

He was right. Halsey had made a sketch of the group around Homoselle's preserving-kettle. No portraiture had been attempted, as the drawing had been made from memory; but there was enough individuality for Skip to recognize the figures without difficulty. "That's Aunt Cinthy; and that's Homo; and that's Chloe; and that's Dash; and that's *me*," he said, his voice rising in crescendo, until "that's me," came out with a scream of delight.

Halsey smiled. The expression of the boy's well-opened, dark eyes, was so bright, that the young man patted his head in token of appreciation.

Chloe, in her old work-day short dress, stood by, looking on. In her hands she held a half-finished stocking on which, from time to time, she pretended to knit.

She was Skip's constant attendant. He would have scorned the idea of a nurse, so she was not called by that objectionable name. But she was told never to lose sight of him. The proximity of the river, and his love of the water, made this precaution necessary. Chloe usually carried her knitting with her, as a show of employment; but the stocking grew very little during the long summer days in which she followed Skip's restless feet along the river-side, through fields, and by blooming hedges.

Pretty soon Halsey began to feel the difficulty every one has experienced, of a sustained effort in the way of entertaining children and servants. The first few moments go swimmingly enough, then comes a drag.

"Come, Skip," he cried, "you and Chloe and Dash keep still, and I will take your portraits to send to London as my first American visitors."

Skip was delighted with the idea, and fell into position at once, but he could not induce Dash to hold his tail still. Halsey assured him it would make no difference, that he would put in the tail, wag and all. Chloe, with characteristic indolence, stood resting her back against the door, her feet lightly crossed, and her hands with the knitting in them hanging idly before her.

The outline of the boy's bright, ugly little face, and the dog's thorough-bred points, were soon transferred to paper; but Chloe's portrait was a work of more time and care.

"When did artist ever have a finer subject for his pencil?" thought Halsey, taking a loose, fresh sheet,

and beginning to sketch in the outlines of her oval face, — a face full of soft shadows, a beautiful peculiarity of Southern women, as if the sun fell on them through vine-covered trellises, flecking their countenances with golden light and shade.

Halsey became so absorbed in his work that time flew by unheeded, and Skip began to get restless. His host beguiled him into prolonging his visit by recounting some of his own school-day adventures. This device succeeded admirably until the child got hungry, and then nothing could keep him. The little company departed before the drawings were completed: but enough had been done to secure an excellent likeness of Chloe, to which Halsey purposed putting the finishing touches another time; and Skip was more than satisfied with the sweep of the dog's expressive tail.

He went away deeply impressed with Halsey's varied accomplishments, — not only with his drawings, which seemed wonderful, but the boating, riding, fishing, racing, and the like, that figured in the stories of his school-days. When Skip got home he confided to Homoselle that he would like to go to an England school.

"An English school, you mean," said his cousin; "and pray why?"

"Because they teach boys all about horses and boats and guns, and not such womanish things as jography and grammar."

"I think you must be mistaken on the latter point. I have not perceived any defects in Mr. Halsey's

grammar; and, as to geography, he seems to know more about it than any woman of my acquaintance," said Homoselle, with a fine irony that was not lost on Skip, for the conversation was discontinued.

Halsey, on his part, when he found himself alone, took Skip's card from his desk, and examined closely the firm, free writing, which vividly recalled the appearance and manner of the girl who had penned it. Like herself, it was graceful and feminine, but with a certain dignity, a quality which never failed to impress an observer of Homoselle.

It was a gracious crown to her other attractions, and one which a man would above all things desire in his own womenkind. The well-formed letters of Skip's name and address, with their flowing lines and absence of attempt at ornament, without any effort of the imagination, suggested corresponding traits in the writer.

The effect of Homoselle's appearance on Halsey was that of beauty as interpreted by Greek art in its largeness and simplicity. Her tall figure, with its generous fulness of chest; her long, shapely limbs, round which drapery fell naturally in those flowing lines that give the beauty of life to inanimate objects; her clear, pale coloring; the pose of her head,—all tended to produce the impression made by those grand, simple figures of an earlier age, which exist for us only in marble. Her movements, too, seemed to him to respond to the calm pulsations of a pure, tranquil heart; for they were without superfluous action, as her dress was guiltless of unnecessary ornament, and her speech without exaggeration.

All these fine thoughts came into Halsey's mind as he pondered over Skip's visiting-card. He was young, with the artistic temperament, and a strong current of sentiment underneath.

Chloe's face he had found a beautiful study for the brilliant effects of light and shade possible to a pencil ; but a face and figure like Homoselle's stirred in him a desire to be a sculptor ; for an artist instinctively seeks to reproduce whatever external beauty touches him, and Homoselle belonged to that rare class of women who are statuesque rather than picturesque.

This result of his meditations this morning was a determination to pay a visit to Dunmore. He had been there several times since the first day, and had always come away with a certain feeling of dissatisfaction. Once he had found Homoselle with hoe and rake, busy over a favorite bed of carnations : and he fancied she looked as if he were in the way ; at any rate, she had told him that " Bertie was in the parlor." On another occasion, while he sat in the wide, cool hall with Bertie and her never-ending embroidery, he caught sight of Homoselle on the portico at the back of the house, superintending and assisting in the replenishing and trimming of innumerable lamps, in fact, the whole illuminating apparatus of the Dunmore household. With some impatience, he mentally likened her to the wise virgins in Scripture, who were never without oil in their lamps ; and he decided that it was quite exasperating for a girl to be so wise. Bertie, who caught the direction of his eyes, and guessed at his thoughts, expressed great disgust for such occu-

pations ; "that for her part, rather than soil her fingers with lamps, she would grope in utter darkness."

"And that is what we have to do when Ellie goes away once in a while," said Mr. Despard, who happened to be crossing the hall at this moment. "The lamps are dim, the soups are cold, and there's na luck about the house at a'. I don't know how it is with your well-trained English servants, Mr. Halsey, but our negroes require constant supervision."

"Yes, I suppose they do," said Bertie, punching a hole in her embroidery ; "but any commonplace body can do that : brighter souls were meant for higher things."

"Embroidery, for instance," said Halsey, examining the long strip of embroidered cambric that Bertie trailed about with her when she felt industrious.

Yet another time he had found Homoselle with a pair of shears, cutting out garments, male and female, for the servants. Her life seemed so full of household cares as to exclude him altogether ; and, what was mortifying, she seemed to be happy and contented with a very slight acquaintance with him. But he was a true Englishman, and not to be baffled by trifles. The more obstacles in the way, the more determined he became.

After making some alterations in his dress, he started for a walk through the extended bit of woodland which at one point lay between Westover and Dunmore. The dividing line was a small stream called Deep Run. Halsey had learned enough about the two estates to know that when he had crossed the

rustic bridge that spanned the little rivulet, which in dry weather might be easily leaped over, he was on the Dunmore land ; and then a pleasant, shady walk led directly to the grounds around the house.

His toilet did not consume much time, for his dress was simplicity itself. There is no doubt that the costume of an Englishman of the nineteenth century is at once the most appropriate and manly ever worn. It has all the beauty of fitness, without a superfluity to distract attention from the man to his clothing. Halsey had the special grace of always appearing scrupulously neat and well-dressed without an atom of foppery.

He had adopted one American comfort, a broad-brimmed straw hat ; and beneath its ample shade, and armed with his stout walking-stick, he soon found himself in the depths of the forest. He had nearly reached the bridge when, to his delight, he saw Homoselle coming towards him.

He had never before had the good fortune to meet her alone. When she caught sight of him, she looked surprised ; and he fancied she gave a startled glance to the right and left, in search of some way of retreat.

"Now, Miss Homoselle, you cannot avoid me without deliberately turning your back on me," he said, raising his hat, and standing aside from the narrow woodland path to let her pass.

"I assure you, I have not the slightest desire, either to avoid you or turn my back on you," said Homoselle, both amused and surprised at this form of address. "Why should I?"

"I don't know. But I imagined I saw you looking for an easy way of escape."

"Perhaps I thought my getting out of the way would be an escape for you."

"Now, how can that be?" Halsey blurted out, his voice expressing how very far wrong her conjecture had been. "Is it possible you have so little self-appreciation as to suppose your company does not give pleasure?"

"My self-appreciation is by no means small, only it lies in another direction."

"May I walk to the end of the wood with you while you tell me what that means?" looking pleased and earnest about what to her was the merest conversational trifle.

"I shall be very glad of your company; but, as to my meaning, the truth is, I did not mean much beyond the fact that I have more confidence in myself on other points than that of pleasing gentlemen." She colored faintly as she said this, for it was more of a confession than she intended.

Halsey felt that it would be impertinent to tell her how little she knew her own power; but he said gravely, "I think you do not know yourself."

Homoselle became grave too. They had unwittingly touched upon a subject over which she sometimes pondered without arriving at any solution.

"Oh, yes, I do!" she answered earnestly. "I am not especially liked by gentlemen. Bertie says I am a woman's woman."

"I do not see how you could have learned *what*

sentiments men entertain towards you, if you keep out of every man's way as persistently as you have kept out of mine."

"Have I appeared to keep out of your way?" she asked in genuine surprise.

"*Appeared!*" exclaimed Halsey. "Now, think yourself. I have been to your house nearly every day since I arrived in America, and this is the first time I have had five minutes' conversation with you."

"That is true," mused Homoselle; "but was that my fault? Were you not talking to Bertie, or something of the sort?"

"*Could* I talk to you when you were absorbed in reading to your father, or weeding flower-beds, or trimming lamps?"

"And did you *want* to talk to me at those times?" she asked, turning to him with the beautiful smile that came at rare intervals, and only when she was well pleased.

It was an effort on Halsey's part to answer the question and the smile as calmly as the occasion required. "Of course I did," he said: "I tried over and over again to engage you in conversation; but you only answered yea or nay, and went your way. Anybody but a pig-headed Englishman would have abandoned the attempt long ago. But see how I have been rewarded to-day!"

"I am so glad you have told me this," said Homoselle frankly. "I promise you it shall not spoil me: it only gives me a little more confidence as far as you are concerned. The next time you tell me it is a fine day, I shall know you mean conversation."

"And do you not like conversation?"

"Certainly I do, but I have no talent for it. Now, Bertie" —

"Yes, I know," interrupted Halsey a little impatiently. "Miss Despard is bright and vivacious, but I am sure she is not the only member of the family who talks well."

Homoselle shook her head. "I see you are incredulous, Mr. Halsey; but it is true that men, except a few married ones, friends of papa's, do not care to talk to me. I don't know why it is. I have sometimes thought over it, myself."

"I dare say your father's friends are the only men you have met who have any judgment." This opinion seemed to Halsey so much a matter of course, that it did not occur to him that it was also a compliment, until it had escaped his lips, and he saw a vivid pink color overspread Homoselle's left ear, the one turned towards him. He found out afterwards that this was a physical idiosyncrasy. Any emotion or excitement would send the color stealing along the left side of her throat, and into her left ear. Her face was otherwise so calm that none but an acute observer would have noticed the peculiarity. Her father had long ago discovered it, and said that her ear was a sort of barometer which indicated the state of the moral atmosphere. She did not speak now for a moment; then she said musingly, "Judgment, — yes, I suppose that is the word. But you know it is not judgment that makes a man fancy a girl. Men are often fascinated against their judgment."

This was so true that Halsey was silenced for a while ; then he said with some warmth, "But think how irresistible must be attraction when the judgment is also satisfied."

"And how happy the girl who possesses such attraction !" said Homoselle seriously, without a shadow of coquetry. Her simple directness and the calm expression of her clear blue eyes had a peculiar effect upon Halsey. He was conscious of an impression something like that produced by sea-shells, or the sea itself in its untroubled moods, pure, fresh, and free as it comes from the hands of its Creator.

Walking through the sweet resinous woods with Homoselle by his side, was so pleasant an experience, that Halsey was dismayed when they began to emerge from the cool, leafy shadows, and the dusty road came in sight.

"Must I leave you now?" he asked regretfully, when she paused as if to dismiss him.

"Yes. I am afraid you would not enjoy bargaining for chickens and eggs ; and that is my errand to-day. Do you see that cabin yonder, with an old negro-woman at the window, and a pig at the door? I am going there in search of poultry."

"I have never seen any one so absorbed in household cares," said Halsey impatiently.

"Yes," she answered with a ghost of a sigh. "I am in a rut, and I don't see how I am ever to get out. In the good old times we kept a housekeeper, but now there is no one to look after things but me."

Halsey thought he knew of some one who dilly-

dallied over embroidery, who might help to look after things ; but he kept his thoughts to himself.

"I find your life very different," he said, "from what I have been led to expect by novelists. You know those veracious persons represent Southern women as utterly incapable of doing any thing for themselves. It seems to me you do every thing."

Homoselle smiled. "Why, did you never hear the oft-told anecdote that represents the true state of the case?"

"No. Tell it me, please."

"Somebody asked the wife of one of our wealthy planters how many slaves her husband owned ; and she replied, — with much feeling, I dare say, — 'Sir, my husband owns a thousand negroes, and only one slave, and that is myself.'"

"Good !" exclaimed Halsey. "That is the pith of the matter. But, as far as I am able to judge, slavery seems to develop two classes of whites, — the few who do every thing, the many who do nothing."

A cloud flitted over Homoselle's serene countenance. "Don't let us discuss the matter," she said earnestly ; "because there is no thoroughfare. Slavery is my Hill of Difficulty, that I cannot get over, or under, or around."

"I understand perfectly," said Halsey heartily ; and then changing the subject, "But you won't forget your promise?"

"My promise?" she said bewildered. "I don't understand."

"Have you forgotten so soon? That, when I tell

you it is a fine day, you will know that it is my stupid English way of beginning a conversation, and what I want is a little encouragement, and not to be sent into the drawing-room to talk to some one else."

Homoselle laughed. "Yes, that is agreed upon: 'a fine day' is to be the countersign."

"You need not laugh," he said gayly, his spirits rising at this concession. "'A fine day' is a far less commonplace remark in an Englishman than with you. We have so few fine days, that, when one does get an opportunity to say so, it sounds almost original. Good-by," he added, venturing to offer his hand.

"What, are you not going to the house to see Bertie and papa?" she said, placing her hand in his; and as the firm, cool touch met his grasp, he felt what a steady, trustworthy hand it was, and how it filled out the promise of the earnest eyes and kindly voice.

"Not to-day," he said, relinquishing it, and heroically refraining from the pressure which every drop of blood in his body prompted him to make.

"Well, 'the next fine day,'" she said with smiling emphasis, as she turned away.

"I never saw a girl who affected my nerves so strangely," thought Halsey, as he looked after her before retracing his steps to Westover.

But the agitation of the nerves, if nerves it were, soon passed away; and he walked home with a lighter step and a blither whistle, while his walking-stick, with sympathetic movement, swung to and fro more gayly than ever.

His thoughts, meanwhile, were not idle. Like those

of most men, where woman is the theme, they lightly turned to love. But this was not for long: with a shrug of the shoulders he put the dangerous fancy aside.

"Truly," he thought, "she is a girl to love; but then, love and matrimony are not for wanderers like me. I will make her my friend. There is no reason on earth why we should not be friends."

And on the broad, safe basis of friendship, he decided that their future intercourse was to rest.

He was in the depths of the wood, where the undergrowth was thickest and the foliage overhead densest, when he thought he heard voices. He stopped, and looked around. When at some little distance he caught sight of Skip, he began to think the boy was ubiquitous. He and his attendant were always cropping up. Halsey was unaccustomed to children, and hitherto his attention had not been attracted to them. He scarcely realized what an important part they play in life, how they wander in and out like some wild melody constantly recurring amid the graver movements of solemn music.

Skip was seated on the trunk of a fallen tree beside the little stream that crept sluggishly through the forest. He was talking gravely to Chloe, who seemed to be in trouble. Halsey found, on a nearer approach, that her arm had been badly torn, in a scramble through a hedge after Skip. Skip's clothes were in tatters; but his skin, with the exception of a few scratches on his face, was safe, while poor Chloe's bare arms had suffered terribly. One deep gash in

particular bled profusely. The girl was sobbing, and Skip was trying to console her.

"Now, Chloe, don't cry. Your arm will be well tomorrow. But look at me: my jacket and trousers won't never get cured, and Homo will make me learn extra lessons for a week. This is four jackets I've wore out since last week. I wish clothes grew on a fellow like skin."

"But jackets don't hurt," moaned Chloe, swaying back and forth with pain.

"But jography and 'rithmetic does," retorted Skip, who had a truly masculine way of offering consolation.

"Why, Skip, what is the trouble?" asked Halsey, coming up at this moment.

"Oh, Mr. Horsely!" exclaimed the boy, turning quickly at this unexpected address. "Chloe have hurt herself."

"Ah! yes, I see," said Halsey commiseratingly, as he took the lacerated arm gently in one hand, while with the other he dipped water from the stream, and began washing the blood from the wound.

Skip looked on open-eyed, and even Chloe's tears ceased to flow as she watched his movements with amazement. After bathing the arm for some time, until the burning pain was in a measure soothed, he drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and, pressing the edges of the wound together, bound it firmly round the girl's arm. Chloe drew back in dismay as she saw the beautifully fine cambric in contact with her dark skin. She seemed to think the handkerchief's snowy whiteness would be contaminated by her touch.

But Halsey was decided, though gentle, in his manipulations. His finely formed hands, with the strong, dexterous fingers, and oval, rose-tinted nails, presented a great contrast to the girl's bronze coloring ; and she regarded him with a sort of fascination. Never before had she been the recipient of such ministrations. She glanced stealthily from the hands to the pleasant, fresh-colored face, and for one moment into the clear, bright eyes ; and a great wave of feeling passed over her, such as she had never felt before. Whether it was gratitude, or not, she did not think ; but the sensation was so new and strange that she trembled from head to foot, and closed her eyes with a shuddering sigh.

"There," said Halsey, relinquishing the arm, "let it stay bandaged until to-morrow, and don't forget to return my handkerchief."

"Thanky, mars'r," said Chloe, with her lowest courtesy, and a world of grateful reverence in her voice : "I'll be sho' to bring yo' handkerchy back. I'se very thankful, sir." As she spoke, a quivering smile disclosed glimpses of pearly teeth, even while the tears glistened on her dark curling lashes.

"And now, Master Skip," said Halsey, turning to the boy, "another time I hope you will be more careful how you scramble through the bushes. Just see your coat : you look like the 'man all tattered and torn,' while poor Chloe is like the 'maiden all forlorn.'"

"No," said Skip, gravely shaking his head, "Chloe couldn't be the 'maiden all forlorn.'"

"Pray, why?"

"Because the man all tattered and torn *married*

the maiden all forlorn ; and I couldn't marry Chloe, because — because ” —

“ Cos I ain't nothin' but a nigger,” said Chloe, finishing the sentence which even Skip found awkward ; while her half smile became audible, as she laughed outright.

Skip laughed too, and Halsey could not help smiling at their merriment.

“ Mr. Horsely,” said Skip as he turned to cross the bridge on his way back to Westover, “ you are the nicest man I ever saw.”

“ Thanks, Skip,” said Halsey, raising his hat in acknowledgment of the compliment. “ I shall try to keep your good opinion. Good-by.”

He went away musing over his new experiences in the New World, and how these people, dark and fair, like many-colored threads, seemed to be weaving themselves into his life.

CHAPTER V.

THE EARLY BIRD.

THE next day Bertie, in a freshly-crimped white dress garnished with crimson ribbons, was dawdling over her breakfast at noon.

Homoselle, enveloped in a linen apron, was busy at a side-table with scissors and paste-pot, sealing innumerable jars of preserves.

The only other occupant of the room was a small negro-boy, who supplemented his height by standing on a stool, while, with a gorgeous plume of peacocks' feathers, he fanned the flies from the table.

With the marvellous facility for sleeping in any position and under all circumstances which characterizes his race, he dozed while he fanned, and was every now and then rudely roused from his slumbers by tumbling from his pedestal, much to the discomposure of Bertie's nerves.

"Homoselle," she said impatiently, "I wish you would not keep this creature in the dining-room: he disarranges my hair far more than he gets rid of the flies. Where is Dick?"

"Dick has gone into the field to help the farmhands, who are very busy just now. I can't possibly keep him idle in the dining-room until twelve o'clock.

Then, you know, I am bringing Tommy up for a dining-room servant, and he can't begin to learn too early. I think he does quite well for such a little fellow."

"I don't know what you call quite well, when he tumbles about as though he had epilepsy, and startles me out of any digestive powers I may have."

"The only remedy I can suggest," answered Homoselle gravely, "is coming down to breakfast four hours earlier."

Bertie pushed back her plate, and began studying the crimson bows on her sleeves with eyes so short-sighted as seemed almost to require actual contact with an object in order properly to see it. The propriety of keeping regular hours had been so often and so thoroughly discussed at Dunmore, that she knew every thing to be said in their favor, and the subject bored her. She hastened to introduce a more pleasant topic.

"What can have become of Mr. Halsey?" she asked, caressing her ribbons. "He is conspicuous by his absence. He was not here yesterday, and it is rather late for him to-day."

Homoselle was silent for a moment. Then, fearing her silence was not quite honest, she said, while the delicate volutes of her ear turned pink, "Mr. Halsey was here for a few minutes yesterday, and for a longer time this morning."

Bertie looked up quickly. "Well, that's cool. Why was not I told?"

"I sent to tell you as soon as he came this morning, and learned that you were in bed and asleep."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Bertie, biting her lip with vexation, which was greatly aggravated by the fact of her pretty toilet having been made for nothing. "I thought he knew I rarely came down before twelve o'clock. Couldn't he wait?"

"He did wait," said Homoselle sententiously.

"How long?"

The color deepened in Homoselle's ear as she said with some hesitation. "About three hours, I think."

"Three hours!" said Bertie, rising, and sweeping her Watteau train into position as she impatiently crossed the floor. "To think of his waiting all that time, and not seeing me! Three hours! Why, he must have come to breakfast."

"Yes: we were at table when he came, bringing papa a beautiful bunch of perch he had caught this morning. That was one you have just enjoyed so much."

"Three hours!" exclaimed Bertie again: "I hadn't an idea he would be so patient. This must not happen again. I must tell him I am not an early riser. But how was it that I did not see him when he called yesterday? Did he come at the same uncivilized hour?"

"He was not at the house yesterday. I met him in our woods; and he walked with me as far as the public road, and then went back to Westover."

"Well, I am sorry to have missed him," said Bertie frankly, as she was leaving the room. "He is one of the few men I know worth talking to. Homoselle, should he ever come again when I am asleep, have

me waked up, and give him a book or something to amuse him until I can get into my clothes. It will not take me any thing like three hours."

When her aunt had gone, Homoselle rang the bell for a servant to clear the table of the breakfast things : she relieved Tommy of his brush, and sent him out to play. Then she ranged her jars of preserves in shining rows in one of the old-fashioned presses built in the wall on either side of the chimney.

This done, she went into the adjoining pantry, and put away her scissors and paste-pot, washed her hands, and took off the apron that completely enveloped her neat morning-dress. These details were nothing in themselves : she had gone through them all, without thought, many times before. They were simple duties performed almost unconsciously ; and yet to-day they were performed with a difference, — a difference so subtle as scarcely to be explained except by illustration. It is so, for instance, in the ordinary act of walking : we do it unconsciously and almost without thought. But let a grand, slow movement of music break upon the ear, and we begin at once to walk with a difference. Our pulses immediately set themselves to a more beautiful rhythm, and our steps keep time. Our walking, hitherto a careless getting over the ground, assumes a greater dignity ; and we realize that walking may become a sublime action, for men have walked to glory, to sacrifice, and to death.

It was so now with Homoselle : a new, indefinable sense of happiness made poetry of life and its homeliest details. She had found, quite accidentally as it

were, a friend who appreciated her ; and this sense of appreciation and sympathy from a manly young fellow like Halsey could not fail to add a new interest to an uneventful existence like hers.

But it seems to be a condition of life, that happiness should ever be accompanied by a foreboding of pain ; and Homoselle found hers mingled with anxiety in regard to her father's affairs. Troubles of a pecuniary nature that had long embarrassed the family — that had, in fact, begun in preceding generations — seemed to be culminating now. Her father, who had always felt their pressure more or less, had recently been greatly harassed by the difficulty he found in meeting obligations of long standing. His ordinary gravity had deepened into gloom, and the cloud on his brow was reflected in Homoselle's heart.

She loved her father better than any thing in the world ; and in some respects their positions seemed to be reversed, for she looked after him with the anxious, protecting affection that is oftener the characteristic of a parent's love for a child.

But to-day, this beautiful June day, she tried to assure herself that his dear face was not so careworn after all, and that it was only her imagination that boded ill.

It was such a perfect season, the skies were so cloudless, and the out-door world so joyous and fresh, it seemed a sin against nature not to be happy. Then her own heart, despite its trouble, beat so lightly that she felt like singing : in fact, she did sing the refrain of an idle song as she left the house with a book in her hand.

“What would Bertie say?” she thought, as she arranged the cushions and settled herself comfortably in a hammock under the shade of a wide-spreading elm : “wouldn’t she laugh to see me, prosaic me, hanging between earth and sky reading poetry?” Homoselle laughed herself, but none the less did she respond to the poet’s soft spell ; and the book that had been opened with a song was closed with shy, sweet tears.

A mild epidemic, that invaded the kitchen no less than the parlor, seemed to have broken out at Dunmore. The symptoms, of course, varied according to the temperament of the individual ; but they were sufficiently like to justify an observer in attributing them all to the same cause. An eruption of fluted frills and pretty ribbons indicated its presence with Bertie, who, ordinarily, was not too careful about her dress ; while with Homoselle it betrayed itself in a slight acceleration of the pulse, and a tendency to unequal spirits.

In order to note the workings of the Anglomania below stairs, it will be necessary to go into the kitchen, which is at a short distance from the house, as most Southern kitchens are. It seems an odd arrangement to persons accustomed to consider the economy of space and the desirability of smoking-hot dinners. But it has its advantages, not the least of which is, that it leaves the dwelling absolutely free from kitchen odors. The refinement of many a beautiful home and sumptuous feast is marred by the smell of cooking. But it must not be supposed that these old-time Virginians did not have their meals served hot : doubtless they were at more trouble than other people, but they contrived to accomplish it in some way.

The Dunmore kitchen was quite a large building, with turret and belfry. In the olden time the clangor of a great bell that could be heard all over the farm announced to the family and its dependents, scattered far and near, that dinner was about to be served. The custom had been retained, because it was a custom, until the time of the late Mrs. Despard. In her last illness she had objected to the noise ; and since her death, twenty years before, the bell had hung idle in its little ivy-covered tower.

A trellis with an arched doorway, and overgrown with Greville roses, screened the kitchen from the house. Within, a great yawning fireplace, in which an ox might have been roasted whole, testified to the bountiful hospitality that had always characterized the house. A bright fire was crackling on the hearth now ; and a savory smell, to which every fragrant herb that grows seemed to have contributed a share, issued from a soup-kettle simmering over the glowing logs. In an economical point of view, one could not help regretting the quantity of fine old timber required to boil that pot of soup ; but then, that is the African way of doing things, and reminds one of the Chinese way of roasting a pig. Cheerful voices, and loud but not unmusical laughter, rang gayly through the smoke-blackened rafters. The cook, a woman of vast rotundity and jolly black countenance, was peeling potatoes, while she cracked jokes with the butler, who was cleaning knives, and the chambermaid, who was dandling a baby.

In an adjoining room that served as a laundry, one caught sight of Cinthy and Chloe.

Cinthy's hands were in the wash-tub, and she scrubbed with a vehemence that was only equalled by the activity of her tongue. Indeed, hands and tongue seemed to stimulate each other. Chloe, towards whom her volubility was directed, was seated on the sill of an open window, putting a new bandage on her arm. Halsey's handkerchief, neatly washed and ironed, lay on the sill beside her.

In the outer doorway of the laundry, blackening the sweet June sunshine, and casting an ugly shadow on the laundry floor, lounged the ungainly figure of a huge negro man. His hat and whip were lying on the floor beside him, and he was idly whittling a stick with a large clasp-knife; but every now and then his sullen, blood-shot eyes threw a stealthy glance towards Chloe, who kept her head bent over her arm. He was not a pleasant-looking object, so it is not surprising that she avoided his glance. He had the short thick neck, low retreating forehead, and coarse cruel mouth, that belong to the worst type of man. But he was in his softest mood now, and his errand was a peaceful one if Chloe would allow it to be so.

"What I want ter know is," Cinthy was saying, "ef you come by dat hankerchy honest? Dat never b'long to no nigger in dis worl'. Real linen cambric, fine as silk, wid French work' letters in de cornder. I'se been washin' white folks' close too long not ter know quality things, and dat's a gen'leman's hankerchy ef ever I seed one."

"I never said a nigger gin it ter me," said Chloe scornfully.

“Well, den, ef you stole it, or a white man gin it ter you, dat’s wuss,” continued Cinthy, whose curiosity, quite as much as her virtuous indignation, was aroused.

Michael’s red eyes gleamed with sudden fury. He buried the blade of his knife in the door-post with an oath.

“A white man !” he thundered, “by ——, ef I see a white man foolin’ roun’ Chloe I’ll kill him.”

Chloe laughed. “La ! what will white man be doin’ to let a nigger like you kill him ?”

“You’ll see,” answered Michael, grinning too ; for Chloe had at last vouchsafed to speak to him.

“Ef you don’t ’count for dat hankerchy proper,” Cinthy went on, “I’ll up and tell Miss Ulla. *She*’ll let you know ef you can be flantin’ roun’ wid a gen’leman’s hankerchy.”

“I’s done tole Miss Ulla all about it,” said Chloe triumphantly. “*She*’s my mistis, and knows what’s proper better’n you.”

“It’s mo’ dan her daddy did. Cuss him !” muttered Michael.

Cinthy alone caught his words ; and, being baffled by Chloe in her pursuit of knowledge, she turned her batteries on Michael.

“Fo’ de Lord, Mike Dray,” she said, “ef you gwine ter talk in dat onchristian way, you got ter git out o’ dis kitchen. You bark up de wrong tree when you come here, like a free nigger as you is, a-cussin’ Mars’ Frank Despard. Dere ain’t a finer man in dis county. You jest look dar in dat glass, an’ see ef you kin hole

a candle ter him. And who is you to be talkin' 'bout proper and onproper? It's like 'possum callin' pig narrer-faced."

Cinthy would have talked until sundown, if Michael had not arrested her stream of words. He perceived he had made a mistake; and, moreover, it was not Cinthy's voice he wished to hear.

"La, sister Cinthy," he said, "don't jaw a feller so for jokin' a little."

"Don't be a-sisterin' me," began Cinthy again. "You ain't none o' my kin, thank de Lord! and you ain't no brudder in de sperit, for you been tunned out of church a dozen times."

"But I'se done reformed. I'se gwine to marry a putty gal, and settle down," said Michael with a leer at Chloe, which she pretended not to see. She had Halsey's handkerchief in her hand now, patting and smoothing it between her fingers.

Just then Skip's voice was heard in the distance shouting, "Chlo-e! Chlò-e!"

The girl started up. "Dar's Mars' Skip a-callin' me," she said, putting the handkerchief quickly in the pocket of her apron.

"No, you don't," said Michael, barring the door with his great brawny arms. "You don't git out o' here widout givin' me a kiss."

"I'd see you dead and buried fust, and I kin go out by de other do'," said Chloe, turning her back on him.

"Jest try it, and see ef I don't ketch you."

Thus foiled, Chloe went back to her seat on the

window-sill. Any thing was better than a scuffle with Michael. Her eyes were bent down, but she watched his movements furtively.

He stood in the doorway chuckling over her discomfiture. Throwing his head back with a loud guffaw, for one moment she was out of his line of vision. Quick as thought she turned her feet outside of the window, and leaped into the garden ten or twelve feet below.

Crash she went through vines and bushes; and Michael, in stupid, blank amazement, stood looking at the spot where she had been sitting.

"Chloe! Chloe!" shouted Skip impatiently.

"Comin'! comin'! little marster," shouted Chloe as she skipped over the asparagus-beds.

It was Cinthy's turn to laugh. "Dar now," she said to Michael, who took up his hat and whip, and turned to depart with an oath, "you'll have ter git up very early in de mornin' to ketch dat yaller imp."

Chloe, delighted with her successful escape, and elated with her sense of freedom, as she flew along the garden to meet Skip, began singing "The Old Ship of Zion," an old-fashioned hymn her mistress had taught her. Her voice rang through the air, clear and sweet, with that plaintive tone peculiar to negroes and all captive peoples. Thus Israel must have sung, "We hanged our harps on the willows; we sat down beside the waters, and wept."

"Let's play circus-horses," said Skip, cracking a long-lashed whip as she joined him.

"No: you pertend to be a gen'leman takin' a drive;

and I'll be yo' sorrel horse, and you kin drive over to Major Carter's."

"All right ; but I haven't any reins."

"I'll git you some in a minute," said Chloe, dashing off to the house at full speed, as was her custom, and returning with some listing, with which she improvised a pair of reins.

"Gee !" shouted Skip ; and in a few moments she was trotting through the woods, stimulated to her highest speed by the frequent stinging of the boy's toy whip.

When they came in sight of the major's house, the horse fell lame, and began limping in a pitiable manner.

"'Deed, Mars' Skip," it said, thereby imitating that famous steed of Balaam's, "I can't trot any mo'. I'se too lame." And the fast-trotting horse, slipping its reins, transformed itself into a pretty mulatto girl, with a quiet, demure step.

Mr. Halsey was hanging over the gate, smoking a cigar, when they approached.

"Well, Skip," he said, nodding as they came up, and watching a wreath of smoke which he puffed into the ambient air.

"I'se fotched you yo' hankerchy, Mars' Halsey," said Chloe, taking the handkerchief from her pocket, and presenting it to him with her ready little courtesy.

"Now, really," said Halsey, shaking out the folds, "that's quite clever of you to bring it back so soon, and so nicely got up too. How's the arm?"

"Heap better, thankty, marster."

"I am glad to hear it ; and here," diving into his pockets, and bringing out a piece of money, "is an English shilling for returning my handkerchief so promptly."

Chloe's countenance beamed with delight, and she made a series of courtesies as she took the coin of the British realm.

"Goody !" exclaimed Skip. "I never saw an English shillin'. Let me look at it, Chloe. Why, it's got a woman's head on it."

"That's Vic," said Halsey, shaking the ashes from his cigar.

"Who's she?" asked Skip, turning the money over in his hand.

"The Queen of England."

"Whew !" whistled Skip : "she ain't no great shakes. Presidents is better than queens. — Here, Chloe. — Good-by, Mr. Horsely."

Halsey laughed. "Good-by, little republican," he called after the boy, who was walking thoughtfully away, cracking his whip. He was thinking he would like to have an English shilling with the head of the Queen of England too.

When Chloe and he were fairly out of sight of the house once more, the girl resumed her reins ; and, as she and her driver tore through the woods, Skip wondered how her lameness had been so suddenly cured.

CHAPTER VI.

BIRTH OF A SOUL.

SOME weeks later there came one of those oppressively warm days that Bertie had said reminded her of quite another climate than Paradise. So she remained in a darkened room, fanning herself and sniffing cologne-water.

Homoselle was more Greek and statuesque than ever, in a white, semi-transparent wrapper that fell in soft folds from her throat to her feet, while her hair was brushed away from her face, and tied at the back of her head with a knot of ribbon. It was difficult to realize that she was suffering from the heat, so cool and fair she looked, her white arms, bare from the elbow, against her white dress, suggesting Coleridge's description of the statue of Hope, "snow embossed on snow." Only the languor of her movements and a slight droop of her eyelids betrayed that she, too, was feeling the enervation of one of those terribly hot spells that paralyze energy, and excuse Southern inertia. She was seated in what her father called his office, a room situated at the extreme end of the right wing of the house, and far removed from the ordinary living-rooms of the family. In fact, to make it more private, the door which communicated with

the rest of the house was closed, and hidden from view by book-shelves. Its only entrance was from the outside, through a small arched porch that corresponded with a similar one at the other wing. Here Mr. Despard transacted his farm business, looked over his accounts, wrote letters, and, when occasion offered, brooded over his troubles.

It was a small, darkly-wainscoted room, bare of furniture, except a few book-shelves, a large writing-table, a hat-rack, one or two stiff, old-fashioned chairs, and a hard, uncomfortable sofa, covered with leather. Every thing was well worn and shabby, but not obtrusively so ; for room and furniture were of about the same date, and, through the lapse of time, had toned down to an uniform dull tint, in which Homoselle's fresh youth shone like a flower. Her dimpled elbows rested on the faded, ink-stained table, and her chin was supported by her hands, as, with dejected countenance, she examined a blurred and blotted page of Skip's copy-book. All through the sultry morning she had been trying to make him study his lessons. Skip himself was fidgeting on one of the high-back chairs, fuming over a French Reader. He was not a brilliant scholar ; he liked any thing better than his book : consequently any thing served to distract his attention from his lesson. Homoselle's task was like that of Sisyphus. When, after immense effort, she had succeeded in fixing his mind and eye on the page, an insect floating by, or a goose cackling in the yard, would recall him from the world of thought to the world of animated nature. It was clear that what-

ever ideas he possessed, contrived to shoot better in God's sunshine than in the forcing process of the school-room. Chloe was seated in the doorway, her knitting in her lap, and her head in the land of Nod; the gentle swaying of the trees near the house covering her with restless patches of light and shade. Without, nature was throbbing with the intense life of summer in its prime. The air was full of the soft breathings and murmurings that we can scarcely be said to hear, but rather to be conscious of with all our senses at once. Within, the only sound was Skip's mutterings over his French book. Presently he looks up, and his face is puckered with childish despair.

"Homo, I can't learn French."

"Why not?" said Homoselle with temper, the heat and Skip's dulness beginning to tell on her patience: "are you more stupid than other boys?"

"No, Homo, it is not that; but it tickles my tongue."

Homoselle did not know whether to laugh or to cry.

"If Skip would only use his mind to study, as he does to make ingenious excuses for not studying, what a scholar he would be!" she thought. "Nonsense," she said, with an accession of severity: "what do you mean?"

"I have been trying to say '*le roi*,' and roll the *r* like you told me, and I can't do it. It makes my tongue feel so funny."

"Skip, do you want to grow up an ignoramus?"

"Yes," said Skip, the puckers disappearing from his brow at the prospect of staving off his lesson by a discussion.

"I don't believe you know what it is, or you would not say such a foolish thing."

"Oh, yes, I do! I saw one at the circus."

"At the circus?" echoed Homoselle, bewildered for a moment.

"Yes, in the cage next to the hippopotamus."

Homoselle buried her face in her hands, and groaned. What with the heat, the flies, and Skip, she felt as if she were being whipped with small, stinging thongs. Her heavy sigh disturbed Chloe's light slumbers. She opened her eyes, and said sleepily, —

"Dar now, Mars' Skip, you done make Miss Ulla cry."

"No," said Skip, putting up his under lip again, "she makes me cry."

"Hold your tongue, Chloe. Don't speak another word, Skip," cried Homoselle sharply; and silence reigned once more, but not for long.

Chloe's head had scarcely dropped to its former position, when Dash, who had been prowling about disconsolately outside, walked sedately into the room, and, going straight to Skip, laid his head on the child's knees, and looked up in his face. Could Skip, could any boy, resist the appeal of those soft, beseeching eyes?

Skip dropped his book, and throwing his arms around the dog's neck, cried, "Dear old doggy, he wants me to go out and play."

This was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Homoselle rose quickly, and, going to the rack, took down a small riding-whip.

"Now, Skip, if that paragraph is not translated in ten minutes, I will switch you. — Go out, Dash."

Dash, at sight of the instrument of punishment, slunk away with his tail between his legs, and Skip picked up his book with alacrity. He dreaded the whip, not so much for the possible pain, though that was bad enough, as for the ignominy of being thrashed by a woman. The wisdom of Solomon's views on the subject of corporal punishment was verified in this instance. The very sight of the rod had the happiest effect.

In ten minutes Skip had read and translated the short, easy paragraph which had been assigned him for a lesson, and school was over for the day.

He put up the pile of well-thumbed, dog-eared books that were his daily torment, and, with a whoop and halloo, bounded out of doors, followed by Chloe, to look for Dash. The dog was found curled up on the grass, half asleep, but with eye and ear alert for the first token of his play-fellow's liberation. Skip, who was not wanting in aptness out of school, rolled over on the grass with his four-footed friend, shouting at the top of his voice, —

"The teacher turned him out
But still he lingered near;
And on the grass he played about
Till Skipwith did appear!"

Homoselle could not help smiling as the words

reached her, but she drew a long sigh of relief that Skip was fairly out of the way. The most vexatious task of the daily round was over ; and she threw herself on the sofa with a view to enjoying a few moments' *dolce far niente*, which is nowhere more *dolce* than in our Southern climate.

She had scarcely straightened her limbs for repose, when a servant brought in the mail-bag, and deposited it on the table. She lay for some time looking lazily out of half-closed eyes at its plethoric fulness, with mingled feelings of curiosity and annoyance. She did not wish to move, and yet she wanted very much to know if there was a letter for her.

Curiosity prevailed. Her disgust was great when, on examining the contents of the bag, she found a great many newspapers, several letters for Bertie, one for her father, and none for herself. The one for her father she recognized but too well. The post-mark, the yellow envelope, the clerkly address, indicated the semi-annual grocery-bill, that twice a year threw a gloom over the family. Homoselle opened it, and ran her eye over the items. She had honestly tried, by all sorts of little economies, to reduce the housekeeping expenses ; and she was anxious to know the result of her management. She sighed when she found that economy in tea, coffee, sugar, and the like, went for very little when wine, liquors, and cigars made up three-fourths of the indebtedness. Leaning her head upon her hands, she pondered sadly over the heavy bill and all the pecuniary troubles that harassed her father, who, day by day, became more irritable and depressed.

She could not help seeing that every day he ate less, and drank more, than his accustomed habit; that his clear, frank eyes were clouded, and even the fine chiselling of his features seemed blunted and coarsened. While she meditated thus, her father came in.

"Ah, Ellie! Is it you? I expected to find Watson here. Whew! how warm it is!" he said, as he hung up his hat and wiped his brow. "What have you there? Another bill!"

"Yes, papa, Blair's bill. It is not quite so heavy as last half," she replied as cheerfully as she could.

"Don't bother: my dear child, a few dollars and cents either way will make no difference. We are sure to end our days in the poorhouse."

"O papa! and I try so hard to be economical. I am afraid I am a very bad manager."

"Nonsense. You are the best manager in the world, but you have never had half a chance. Had your ancestors been as thrifty as you are, we should be rich to-day. But there is no use in crying over spilt milk, and I won't have you fretting over these confounded bills. We'll weather the storm yet, my darling," he said, caressing her cheek, and speaking more cheerfully than he felt.

"Dear papa, it is you who have never had half a chance, with grandfather's debts to pay, and all your other troubles; and then poor mamma dying so soon. I think, if she had lived, every thing would have been better."

"I certainly should have been better," said Mr. Despard moodily. "You are right, Ellie: your moth-

er's death was the greatest calamity that could have befallen us. Had she lived, I should not only have been better, but you would have been happier, my darling. But come, no more tears to-day. I can stand any thing better than seeing you unhappy. Run away now. I have some letters to write."

Homoselle pressed her lips to her father's cheek with yearning, passionate tenderness. "I am going, papa," she said gently. "You always send me away now: I used to be a comfort to you."

"You are always my only comfort, Ellie. But you see I am busy to-day: I am expecting Watson every moment. By and by I will come and talk to you. Go now."

When Homoselle was gone, her father began pacing the floor in his restless fashion. He was in a state of anxious expectation. Watson, his man of business, had promised to do what he could to raise money to pay a note which would fall due at an early day. Every thing depended on his success. Amid all his pecuniary difficulties that might be staved off for a time, this was one that could not wait.

Mr. Despard took up his hat, and went out of doors again. He could not keep still. The sun was beating down on the broad gravel-walk that traversed the lawn, but he seemed unconscious of its heat. He continued walking to and fro, crunching the pebbles beneath his feet as though he would make them feel the weight that was pressing on his own spirit.

All nature seemed to be fainting under the heat and burden of the day. The turf looked parched and

thirsty ; the flowers drooped ; even the river flowed by with a soft, lazy plash, as if incapable of greater exertion. Mr. Despard, who kept his eye on the road by which he expected Watson, alone seemed not to care for shelter from the searching power of the sun.

Dash, soon tired of romping, was sleeping in a shady corner of the porch, while Skip played with Chloe at hide-and-seek in the shadow of the old house. Chloe flitted in and out, behind the lilac-bushes, under the portico, and into nooks and crannies, where Skip would discover her with shouts of laughter.

Having at last exhausted the hiding-places on the grounds, she slipped unperceived into the office, and, leaping over the back of the sofa, squatted down in the triangular space its position left across one corner of the room. She giggled to herself as Skip's perplexed voice reached her from time to time.

"Where are you, Chloe? Come, now, this is no fun. You must be up a tree, and you know that is against the rules. If you don't come down pretty soon I'll stop playing."

Chloe was still hiding behind the sofa when Watson rode up, and, having dismounted from his handsome brown mare, walked with Mr. Despard to the house.

"Well, Watson, what luck?" were the latter's first words as they entered the office, and closed the door.

Chloe's titter of delight, at having so successfully eluded Skip, was quickly silenced when she found she had been caught in a trap of her own setting. She felt no qualms of delicacy about eavesdropping: she was never the wiser for any business talk she might

overhear. Crops, stocks, and loans conveyed no meaning to her mind. But she was dismayed at the prospect of being a prisoner for an indefinite length of time. Mr. Watson generally paid long visits to her master ; and how could she keep still, for hours it might be ? Stretching herself at full length on the floor, she settled her head comfortably on her arm for a nap. Sleeping, she concluded, was the pleasantest occupation under the circumstances : moreover, there was nothing she liked better at any time.

Watson the manager, one of the best of his class, was a man whose family had seen better days ; but the generations of which had been steadily descending the social scale through the gradations of prodigality, make-shift, poverty, and want of education, until now its latest representative was a needy, unlettered overseer of another man's slaves. But the office of overseer was in such disrepute that he had assumed the title of manager, — an innocent euphemism, which had been accorded to him at first as a joke, but which now seemed to belong to him as a right. He was a man of about fifty, with a coarse, florid complexion, scrubby, ill-shaven beard, tobacco-stained lips, and hard horny hands ; but there was a shrewd expression in his light blue eyes not untempered with kindness.

His dress was a specimen of the want of attention to small things characteristic of Virginians. His linen was flabby and badly washed, his boots were rusty, and his clothes rough and ill-fitting ; but he had a good, sturdy figure, and the boots, worn outside his trousers, displayed a well-made leg and a remarkably small foot, one last remnant of gentle birth.

"What luck?" asked Mr. Despard anxiously; but, even as he spoke, his eye caught the reflection of the cheery look in the manager's face.

"Better, sir, much better than I expected," said Watson in a slow, easy way, as he leisurely placed his hat and whip on the table, and took his seat by it, opposite his employer. "I think I see our way out of the difficulty this time with a *leetle* sacrifice on your part."

"A little sacrifice!" echoed the other with a sigh of relief. "Heaven knows there is no personal sacrifice I would not make, however great it might be."

"I am glad to hear that, sir; because I was afeard you would not altogether like the way of raisin' the money."

Mr. Despard's brow contracted, and the hopeful light died out of his eyes. "You mean the negroes?"

"Yes," answered Watson, with as much decision as his drawling voice was capable of expressing, "I mean one of the negroes. But"—he hastened to forestall the objections he saw in Mr. Despard's face—"in the easiest kind of way. I saw Miss Rutledge's overseer this mornin'; and he says she has taken a liking to one of yo' young women for a lady's maid, and is willin' to give a fancy price for her. Thar's not a kinder mistress in the worl' than Miss Rutledge; and her servants, particularly them about the house, has an easy time of it." The manager paused for breath. Mr. Despard's brow cleared a little; and Watson continued, "With regard to the girl herself, you won't be breakin' up any family in

partin' with her, because she is an orphan, without any relations that I know of."

"Why, Watson," said Mr. Despard with a weary smile, "there is no such girl on the place except Chloe."

"And Chloe is the very one," replied Watson, throwing his head back, and hooking his thumbs in the armholes of his vest with the air of a man who has succeeded in hitting the right nail on the head.

The blood rushed to Mr. Despard's face, and then receding, left it pale and rigid. "Impossible," he said shortly.

"Impossible!" exclaimed the manager, nettled at having cold water thrown on the only feasible plan of raising money, of which there was desperate need. "Then I am afraid I shall have to wash my hands of the business."

"Watson," said his employer apologetically, "you know Chloe is my daughter's maid: they grew up together, and nothing would distress Homoselle more than to part with the girl."

"I should be mighty sorry to distress Miss Homoselle, of course," said Watson doggedly; "but she would do any thing for you, and this is a very serious matter."

"But, Watson, you do not understand."

"To tell you the truth, sir, I do not."

Then Mr. Despard, the blood surging to his face again, leaned across the table, and said, in a low but distinct tone, a few words that brought an answering flush to Watson's cheek.

"Ah, I see!" murmured the manager in round-eyed amazement.

Mr. Despard looked hastily round the room. "Watson, did you hear something?"

"No ; but there's an awful lot of rats about the old place," said Watson, glad to break the awkward pause.

"True ;" and Mr. Despard sank back into his chair again.

Watson was not a man to wonder long over trifles : he soon recovered his self-possession, and returned to the charge.

"You know the girl would be in the neighborhood," he said persuasively, "and some day you might be able to buy her back."

"Tut, tut !" said Mr. Despard, "no chance of getting any thing back. My fortunes are growing worse and worse every day. But it cannot be. I will not sell the girl. I mean to give her her freedom as soon as she is old enough to profit by it."

Watson was silent for some time : then he said, "I have had another offer for the same girl. P'r'aps you'll think of it with more favor. The free negro Michael wants to buy her for a wife ; and, if she is willin' to marry him, I don't think you could do better by her. You would be providin' her with a home and protector, and securin' her freedom at the same time."

"Why did you not mention this first?" asked Mr. Despard impatiently.

Watson fidgeted in his chair. "To tell you the truth," he said, after much preliminary hesitation, "Michael is not able to give as much for the girl as Miss Rutledge ; and, viewin' the matter from my

standpoint, I'd rather be Miss Rutledge's slave all my life, than b'long to that brute Michael half an hour."

"And is he such a beast?" asked Mr. Despard.

"'Pears so to me; and then I think he tries to make the other negroes discontented. You see, he is free, and has quite a sum of money; and he tells the others that they ought to be free and rich too."

"Yes, yes. I remember, now, I have heard his name in connection with that fellow Johnson at Trenholme's."

"What do you say to Michael's offer?" urged Watson.

"If Chloe wishes to marry him, I will consider the plan; but I will not have her inclination forced. As you say, it would be better to sell her to Miss Rutledge. But I will never sell the girl into slavery. If we can get the money in no other way, then my note must go to protest," said Mr. Despard, rising.

Watson rose too: the interview had come to an end, and the two men parted, bitterly disappointed.

Watson mounted his sturdy, ill-groomed mare, and rode away, his face aflame with indignation at Mr. Despard's squeamishness and pig-headedness. The latter buried his hands in his pockets, and, drawing his hat over his eyes, wandered off to the woods.

When they were both gone, Chloe rose from her hiding-place, and looking cautiously round, to see that nobody was near, moved the sofa from its position so as to afford egress, and walked slowly into the middle of the room. A great change had come over

her in the few minutes, since, with naked flying legs, she had leaped over the sofa at a single bound. Into her childish face, so comely with all physical beauty, there seemed to be dawning, and with the pain that ever attends birth, the first glimmering of a soul. Her eyes shone with a strangely pathetic light as she stood by the chair Mr. Despard had just left, passing her small hand gently over the arms where his hands had so lately rested. "He wouldn't sell Chloe. He wouldn't sell Chloe," she repeated softly to herself; and then, hearing voices and footsteps, she started like a frightened hare, and ran out of the house.

Several hours after, Skip found her lying on the ground in an old summer-house, her face buried in her arms.

"Get up, Chloe," he cried, shaking her with all his small might. When at last she rose reluctantly, and he saw her troubled, tear-stained countenance, he asked solemnly, "What is the matter, Chloe? Has you got religion?"

"No, Mars' Skip: I'se been thinkin'."

"Thinkin'! Oh, no! you couldn't have been doin' that; because Homo says I haven't any thinkin' machine, and I know I am sensibler than you."

CHAPTER VII.

“BLESS ME, EVEN ME ALSO.”

A FEW days later, Homoselle waylaid Watson on his way to her father's office, and carried him off to the dining-room for a private conversation.

“Now, Mr. Watson,” she began, as soon as he was comfortably seated, and she had given him a glass of wine, “I want to know what it is that makes papa look so worried and out of sorts. He will not tell me for fear of distressing me. But nothing distresses me so much as being kept in the dark. I believe I could help him if I only knew what it is that troubles him.”

“Well,” drawled Watson, who always began with “well,” whether the subject were good or bad, “you see, Miss Homoselle, if yo’ pa don’t tell you about his affairs, I am afeard he won’t like my doin’ of it.”

“But you *must* do it,” said Homoselle impatiently, and a little imperiously.

“Well, if I must, I must, I suppose,” he answered good-humoredly ; “and it’ll not be tellin’ any secrets to say it’s all about money. You know, he is always hard up.”

“Is it any worse just now than usual?” asked Homoselle anxiously.

“Well, yes ; because he is obleeged to raise a pretty

big sum in a short time, and he don't know whar the money is to come from."

"Can't *you* suggest something?"

"Well, you see, I have suggested the only plan I know of, and he won't hear of it. So thar it is."

"I will persuade him to hear of it. Tell me what the plan is."

"Thar, now! I knowed you would take a sensible view of the matter."

"But you have not told me what it is," said Homoselle, after waiting some time for him to proceed.

"Well" —

"Well?"

"You know the money is wanted mighty bad?"

"Yes, yes; but your plan for getting it?"

"Well, it is to sell Chloe."

Homoselle started to her feet, and sat down again, her face flushed with anger.

"Sell Chloe!" she exclaimed indignantly. "Of course papa will not hear of it, Mr. Watson. I should as soon think of his selling *me*!"

Watson scratched his head, and looked up at the ceiling.

"Why," continued Homoselle, her eyes filling with tears, "when I was a little girl, her mother died; and papa brought her into the house, a wee, toddling thing, and told me she was to be my maid, and we grew up together. She is the most affectionate creature in the world, and devoted to me, — peculiarly so of late, as though she had some intuition of this dreadful scheme. I would rather *starve* than sell Chloe."

"I don't doubt, Miss Homoselle, that you are fond of the girl ; but I know you are fond of yo' pa too."

"So I am, so I am," cried Homoselle, burying her face in her hands. Presently she looked up ; and, though her face was pale and troubled, her manner had recovered its usual calmness. "How much money is required?" she asked in a grave, determined voice.

"Fifteen hundred dollars."

"Fifteen hundred dollars ! Is it possible my poor little Chloe would sell for so much?"

"Well, you see, she is a well-favored, healthy young nigger ; and a lady has offered what we call a fancy price for her."

"Fifteen hundred dollars ! How soon will this have to be paid?"

"In three weeks."

Homoselle was silent for a moment : then she said, "Mr. Watson, I have a plan, or rather a wild hope that I can get the money. I shall let you know if I succeed, in a week, or a fortnight at the farthest. In the mean time don't tell papa."

"Very well, Miss Homoselle," said Watson, rising, glad to have the interview over ; for, underneath the hard crust with which time and custom had incased his soul, his human heart was touched, and the sensation was new and uncomfortable.

Homoselle went at once in search of Chloe : she felt as though a great wrong had been done the girl, even to suggest selling her, and she wanted to make amends. She found her with Skip, who had been con-

fined to his bed for two or three days with a cold that made him feverish and cross.

The bed was littered with pictures and broken toy-soldiers ; while against the wall stood the frame of a kite, partially covered with flaming red paper. The little invalid had evidently tried and tired of these sources of amusement, and was now lying back among the pillows, with flushed face and eager eyes, while Chloe exorcised the spirit of restlessness with a story.

Homoselle entered at the most critical moment. Chloe was saying in a deep, sepulchral voice, "And the sperrit, all wrapped up in grave-clothes, beckoned him on and on, with a long bony finger ; and he followed the sperrit until it stood by his mother's grave, and then " —

Just here Homoselle opened the door, and Skip gave a little nervous shriek at the unexpected movement. But the substantial appearance of his cousin in the flesh fell very flat upon a mind wrought up by the horrors of a ghost-story.

"Now, Homo," he said fretfully, "Chloe was just comin' to the pretty part. I wish you had staid away."

"Why, you are not very hospitable this morning, Skip. I have come to see how you are, and if Chloe is a good nurse."

Unconsciously her voice softened as she mentioned Chloe's name, and glanced towards her.

She was answered by a look so full of mute, humble affection, from the girl's dark eyes, that she felt the tears rush to her own again, and turned hastily away.

"Skip, no more ghost-stories to-day. You look a little feverish ; and, Chloe, remember you must never excite a sick person, especially a sick child."

"Yes, Miss Ulla."

"And now wouldn't you both like to have a tea-party?"

"Dat we would," exclaimed Chloe, springing to her feet, and clapping her hands ; no sentiment in her nature too strong to overcome an ever-ready appetite for things good to eat.

Skip's eyes brightened with languid pleasure. "Can we have preserves, Homo?" he asked.

"Yes, a little preserves and some sponge-cake. Chloe can make the tea, and cut the bread and butter ; and you can invite all your old soldiers to the party. Won't that be nice?"

Skip nodded. "But, Homo, old soldiers like toddy better than tea."

Homoselle laughed. "Yes, that is true, but they like toddy for dinner : this, you know, is to be high tea, as Mr. Halsey would call it. What kind of preserves do you like best?"

"Peaches."

"And you, Chloe?"

"Blackberries, ma'am."

"Then come with me, and I will give you the things for a grand party."

Very little had been said or done, and yet Chloe felt intuitively something more than ordinarily kind and gentle in Homoselle's manner ; and the girl's heart responded with a feeling of greater devotion than ever, if that were possible, to her young mistress.

When all the arrangements for the impromptu entertainment had been satisfactorily made, Homoselle went to her room to write a letter, the first step in her plan for raising fifteen hundred dollars.

After much deliberation as to what was best to say and what to leave unsaid, and many discarded beginnings, she sent the following letter to her aunt, a Mrs. Dinwiddie, the only surviving member of her mother's family : —

DEAR AUNTIE, — The day your more than kind letter arrived, inviting me to join you in a tour through Europe, I had no thought but to write and thank you with all my heart, and say, dearly as I should like to travel, it would be impossible for me to leave home and my father. But something has occurred to-day which induces me to beg that you will extend your kindness to me in another direction. I know all the objections you will urge, dear auntie; but Europe, Asia, and Africa combined could not yield me half the satisfaction, just now, that the money required for a tour would do. I am in terrible need of a very large sum, and I do not know where to turn for help but to you. I do not ask you to give, but to lend it to me. I suppose I shall have something one of these days, and I will return it, principal and interest. I have no idea how much money you had purposed to spend on my European trip, which you said would extend over a year; but I hope it was as much as fifteen hundred dollars, for that is the sum I want you to lend me. With best love for uncle and the boys,

Your devoted

HOMOSELLE.

She took the letter herself to the post-office; and, as it happened to be near the time for the departure of the boat, she waited on the wharf until she saw the letter-bag safely deposited on the little steamer that carried the mails up and down the river.

Returning home she met the negro Michael, who was loitering in the road as if waiting for some one ; but as soon as he saw her he quickened his pace, and passed her with the most servile obeisance, but none the less did she breathe more freely when he was quite out of sight. He was a creature of such immense physical force, and with such an evil countenance, that one shuddered to think of what he might be capable. Homoselle felt contaminated by the glance of his sullen, blood-shot eyes.

In the evening she was a little surprised by her father asking her to have tea earlier than usual, that he had to go out on business, and would probably be gone all night. Something in his voice, as he made the request, made her look anxiously in his face.

"Is any thing the matter, papa?"

"No, nothing ; that is, nothing to alarm you," he said, and went away.

Some time after, when she went into his room to carry a small satchel into which she had put his night-clothes and some necessary toilet-articles, she found him examining a case of pistols. He smiled when he discovered her errand.

"Very thoughtful of you, my child, but I shall not need any luggage," he said, putting aside the pistols, and kissing her perplexed brow.

"Why, you said you would be gone all night."

"So I did, but I shall not go to bed."

"Now, papa, you know I hate mysteries ; and I shall be very unhappy unless I know what you are going to do."

Mr. Despard laughed. "I declare, I am the worst henpecked fellow in the country. It is a pretty bad case when a man is always obliged to tell where he is going, and what he is going to do."

"So you are going to tell me, after all, there's a dear papa."

"Then if I must, I must. The fact is, there has been some disturbance among the negroes in the neighborhood, — nothing serious, but the gentlemen in this district think it best to patrol the country for a night or two in order to let them know we are on the alert. Why, you are as pale as death! You are not afraid, my daughter?"

"Not for myself, papa."

"Nonsense, Ellie! there is not the least danger. You know how timid negroes are. If they see a few determined white men going about armed, they will slink away like spaniels."

"Not all. I saw one to-day, a terrible creature, who looked as if he would not be afraid of the Evil One himself."

"The Evil One, — is that the polite term for the Devil?" returned her father, smiling. "The man you saw must have been the free negro Michael: he seems to be the bogey of the neighborhood. By the by, he and a white man by the name of Johnson are said to be the ringleaders of the disturbance."

"I thought so. As soon as you mentioned the subject, my mind reverted to that man. He looked so sullen and discontented. I wish he would go and live in Africa."

"Don't bother about him, child. Let it be proved that he has incited any thing like rebellion, and you will never hear of him again."

Homoselle shuddered. "I wish my lot had been cast in a land where there are no negroes," she said passionately.

"Tut, tut! don't talk nonsense: they are here now, through no fault of our own, and we must do the best we can with them."

In the evening, while Mr. Despard was making a hearty meal at tea, in order to fortify himself for his night's ride, his gray horse Captain stood saddled and bridled at the gate. Chloe, coming home from the orchard, in the dusk, with her apron full of summer apples, seeing the horse, uttered an exclamation of dismay, and dropping her apples, even the one she was eating, ran into the house with a vague idea of trying to prevent her master from going out.

She had seen Michael that very morning; and he had threatened, in his violent way, that if Mr. Despard refused to let him have her for his wife, the gentleman would suffer for it, and that his life was not very safe under any circumstances. At another time she would have paid little heed to his swaggering bluster; but of late she had been conscious, she hardly knew how, of a thunderous atmosphere among the negroes that portended a coming storm. The men had been unusually cautious, for negroes; and the women, if they knew their hopes, had been kept in ignorance of their plans. Chloe, of course, was too young to be trusted in any degree; but she had seen and heard enough to suspect

that something was going on that boded no good to the white people, and with rare intuition she feigned utter ignorance and unconcern. She went into the house now, and, hearing voices in the dining-room, stole in softly, her unshod feet making less noise than the violent beating of her heart.

Mr. Despard had just risen from table ; and Homoselle, with his hat and whip in her hand, was trying to persuade him to take a light overcoat.

"This summer night, Ellie? Pooh, child! one would think I was going to Siberia."

"But, papa, it will certainly turn cooler towards morning ; and, besides, it may rain."

"It is very good of you to try and coddle your old father, but indeed that overcoat would bore me," said Mr. Despard, taking his hat and whip, and kissing Homoselle's forehead.

"Dear father," she said, throwing her arms round his neck, and returning his caress on both cheeks. As he raised his head from his daughter's embrace with a tender, "God bless you," he saw Chloe standing in a corner of the room, regarding them with such a yearning look that her eyes seemed almost to speak.

In his heart he heard the piteous cry that of old stirred Israel's soul : "Bless me, even me also."

"Chloe," he said gently, taking up the discarded overcoat, and throwing it across her shoulder, "put that over my saddle. Perhaps I may want it, after all."

The girl's heart leaped at the kindly voice and action that included her in her master's service, but she

could not find courage to speak the warning she wished to give him. She followed him in silence to the gate where Captain stood, pawing the ground impatiently ; and, having arranged the coat as she was bidden, she opened the gate for horse and rider to pass through.

Mr. Despard rode away, not knowing that the breast of his overcoat was wet with the tears of his young slave, and equally unconscious that she had formed a resolution, with a touch of the heroism always possible to a woman where her affections are concerned, to serve her master even at the sacrifice of herself.

CHAPTER VIII.

RAISING THE WIND.

THE patrol of the district continued for several nights ; and, no signs of rebellion being found among the negroes, the disaffection, if such existed, was supposed to have been suppressed by the display of so much energy and determination ; and the white people, gentle and simple, relapsed into their ordinary careless sense of security.

At the end of a week Homoselle received a letter from her aunt, which in some respects made her cheeks tingle ; but, as it was satisfactory in the main, she swallowed her pride, and accepted both money and reproof meekly, for her father's sake. Mr. Despard was, undoubtedly, a man who inspired love of a very devoted and self-sacrificing character. It had always been so. However untoward his fortunes were in other respects, he had always possessed the power of making himself loved. Many another man would have given all he had in exchange for this power. But where the secret lay, it was difficult to discover. He was not remarkable, either personally or mentally, and he was both reticent and undemonstrative ; and yet a look, a smile, a kindly word, from him, would often outweigh years of devotion in another. It was an in-

definable charm, like the perfume of a flower or the wooing of the wind : no one knew whence it came.

He himself seemed unconscious or indifferent to it, and yet through life he had been remarkable for the affection he inspired in both men and women. Homoselle did not show her aunt's letter to her father, and he never knew at what sacrifice the money was obtained.

Mrs. Dinwiddie wrote as follows : —

DEAR HOMOSELLE, — I cannot disguise that I have been very much annoyed by your letter. It has disarranged all my plans for doing you a personal benefit, besides depriving me of a great deal of anticipated pleasure. For I must confess, that, though your enjoyment was my chief object, I had my own gratification in view too, when I asked you to join us in our contemplated tour. You know, my dear child, I have always wanted to be of service to you, not only on your own account, but for your mother's sake ; but a married woman is never quite a free agent, and it is only within the past year or two that my husband has felt himself in a position to gratify my wishes in this respect ; and it was his proposition to take you with us to Europe. After much thought he concluded that you would derive more personal benefit from such a trip than from the same amount spent in any other way. But you have decided otherwise ; and the sum with which we hoped to give you so much pleasure, culture, and improvement in every respect, will be swallowed up in the expenses of the Dunmore estate, — whither your poor mother's little patrimony went, — and you will be none the better for it. I am sorry, inexpressibly sorry ; and your uncle is so provoked that it will be many a long day before I can venture to suggest your name to him again. You must excuse my saying my say so very plainly : you know it is a failing of mine. My husband says I have my say, and other people have their *way* ; which is true in this instance, for he has deposited to your credit at his banker's, Messrs. Worth

and Wiley, the sum of fifteen hundred dollars. It is a gift, my dear child, not a loan; and I much fear it is all I shall ever be able to do for you. I hope, for your sake, you are right in supposing that some day you will have something; but, unless there is better management in the future than in the past, I fear you will be disappointed.

Your truly loving aunt,

MARY H. DINWIDDIE.

Homoselle, being relieved from her pressing anxiety by her father's increased cheerfulness and the collapse of the negro insurrection, resumed her usual tranquillity, and felt free once more to enjoy life, and all the happy possibilities of youth.

Halsey came every day, and infused an immense amount of energy into the pleasures of the home circle. Southerners are apt to enjoy their pleasures indolently, but Halsey would none of this. He inspired even Bertie to become an early riser, and to brush the morning dew from the grass by a brisk canter before breakfast. She and Homoselle and Skip were his daily companions in walking, riding, rowing, fishing, — in fact, in all kinds of out-door recreations. Life was twice as full of movement and exertion since the young Englishman came, and Skip and Homoselle enjoyed it in every fibre of their vigorous youth; and Bertie *said* she liked it, — at any rate, she liked Halsey, which amounted to the same thing at the time.

It was difficult at first for Bertie to understand that Halsey really wanted Homoselle and Skip to join them in their various excursions by wood and water. She thought he merely invited them for politeness, and she intimated as much to her niece.

"Homoselle," she said one day, half in jest, half in earnest, "there is not the slightest necessity for your boring yourself by going with us in all our rambles."

"It does not bore me in the least: I like it," said Homoselle with her usual frankness.

"But then, it does not take two women to entertain one man, you know; and I am perfectly capable of entertaining Mr. Halsey by myself," said Bertie, with less of jest and more of earnest in her manner.

"Conversation would be very limited if it were never to include more than two persons," said Homoselle, smiling. "Mr. Halsey has always asked me to go; and I supposed he thought himself capable of entertaining two women, and I am sure I have found him so."

"Pshaw! you may be sure a man never cares about talking to more than one woman at a time."

"I don't see why that should be, unless he is in love with the woman. I have often heard Mr. Halsey say he preferred general conversation, except in very particular cases."

"Ah, yes! in *very* particular cases," said Bertie with a great deal of meaning in her voice, and modestly casting down her eyes.

Homoselle laughed. "Well, I will not go with you on the water this evening. Skip has asked me to walk with him to the mill, to give my opinion about a puppy the miller has promised him."

In the evening when Halsey came, and found only Bertie with broad-brimmed hat and parasol waiting for him, on the portico, he looked round inquiringly. "Why, where is Miss Homoselle?"

"She is not going on the river this evening."

Halsey's countenance fell. "Not going? Is she not well?"

"Oh, yes! But she and Skip are going on some expedition in search of puppies."

"In search of puppies without me! Why, I know more about puppies than anybody in the world. Have they gone?"

"I don't know. They were here a moment ago."

"Ah, yes! I see," said Halsey, who just then caught sight of Homoselle going through the garden gate,—Skip trotting delightedly by her side with a small, cotton-lined basket in his hand, in which he intended to bring home his new-born puppy. "Ah! Miss Homoselle," he cried, striding over the grass, and arresting them. "Can't we come with you to look for puppies? You know, there is nothing I like so much as puppies. It is really too sunny to go boating this evening. I'll tell Miss Despard so. I'll tell her she will get no end of freckles. You know, she does not like freckles."

"Yes, Homo, let him go with us," pleaded Skip, dropping his cousin's hand, and trying to possess himself of Halsey's. Homoselle, remembering the conversation of the morning, could not help smiling a little demure smile. "I should be very glad to have you, of course," she said; "but you must see what Bertie says."

"By all means," said Halsey, striding (no other word will describe his long, plunging step) back again to the portico and Bertie.

What he said to her, Homoselle could not hear ; but it ended in Bertie joining the party to the mill.

After this there was no more question of the desirability of Homoselle's company ; but Bertie, whose conceit was invincible, decided that it was only Halsey's European notion of propriety that made a companion necessary.

The next evening it happened to rain in torrents, but Halsey came as usual ; and, as usual, Bertie captured him as soon as he entered the drawing-room, and began talking volubly about a new author, Currer Bell, who had electrified the novel-reading world by the publication of "Jane Eyre" and "Shirley." Halsey listened, and responded pleasantly ; but his eyes would wander off to the window-seat, where Homoselle, who had not read "Jane Eyre," was silently making allumettes for her father's pipe.

At the first breathing-spell in the conversation he turned towards her, and said eagerly, but with singular inappropriateness, "A fine day, Miss Homoselle."

Homoselle looked in a bewildered way at the clouds and pouring rain before she remembered that "a fine day" was the countersign they had agreed upon. She laughed merrily, as she replied, "Yes, for ducks and geese."

Halsey, who had evidently not thought about the weather, colored at his blunder, and, when Bertie asked him if he intended his remark for a joke, had nothing to say. But he had accomplished his purpose of bringing Homoselle into the conversation, and he soon recovered his equanimity. He was a clever

young fellow enough, but he was utterly incapable of *finesse*. Any attempt of the kind was like the playfulness of a bull in a china-shop. He belonged to that large class of Englishmen, who, when they have an objective point in view, a partridge or a Balaklava, go at it with a singleness of purpose that makes them blind to side issues. Difficulties and obstacles become invisible, and woe to every thing that comes between them and their aim !

The clouds passed away : the short-lived summer rain ceased, leaving the earth fresh and smiling through her veil of tears, while tree and shrub and flower exhaled their sweetest odors. The sun declined in softened splendor, filling the air with a golden glory.

Halsey walked home in the mellow light, swinging his cane, and whistling, "The girl I left behind me." He had scarcely entered the wood, when, at a little distance ahead of him, he saw, seated on the trunk of a fallen tree, the slender, graceful figure of a woman. A nearer approach made him aware that it was Chloe : he had not recognized her at first, her long dress, in which he had never seen her, giving her a taller and more slender appearance ; and her hair, put up in some womanly fashion, unlike her ordinary mop of curls, made her look older and more sedate. The fact is, her childish, undeveloped nature had received an immense impetus in the last few days. The event which called one feeling into play seemed to have quickened all the rest. Ever since she had overheard Mr. Despard's confidences with his overseer, her dormant faculties had been springing into

life, and maturing with tropical rapidity; and what had been vague yearnings were now definite hopes and desires. Her personal appearance had kept pace with her mental development, and in an incredibly short time she seemed to have changed from a child to a woman.

Halsey guessed, from her attitude and the expectant pose of her head, that she was waiting and watching for some one; and the expression of her eyes as he came in view made him feel sure that she was waiting for him. He was a little annoyed, and yet his interest and curiosity were aroused to know what she could have to say to him. Ever since the affair of the handkerchief, he had been conscious of an humble, spaniel-like deference in her manner towards him; and often when he was at Dunmore, and she was about the house and grounds in attendance upon Skip, he would catch her eyes fastened upon him with peculiar earnestness.

She rose as he approached, and stood in the narrow woodland pathway; so he could not choose but know that she wished to speak to him.

"Well, Chloe, do you want any thing with me?" he asked kindly, in answer to her courtesy and her "Sarvent, mars'r."

"Please, mars'r, I'se got a favor to ask you."

"More scratches to bandage, eh?"

"No, mars'r, 'tain't that," she said, with a fleeting smile at the remembrance of her wounded arm.

"Another shilling, perhaps?"

Chloe's lip quivered. "No: I ain't spent the one you gin me yet. It's somethin' mo' importanter."

"Then let us have it, by all means; but be quick about it, for it is getting late," said Halsey, glancing towards the west, where the sun hung low in the heavens, sending its level rays through the woods that glistened with raindrops.

"Please, sir, I want you to buy me."

"Buy you!" exclaimed the sturdy young Englishman, fairly bouncing with astonishment. "Bless my soul! Buy you!"

"Yes, mars'r: I'se got to be sold, and I want you to buy me," said the girl, the tears rolling down her cheeks, and her voice choked with sobs.

"Nonsense! I don't believe Mr. Despard would sell a child like you," Halsey said with a certain roughness, for he felt the tears rush to his own eyes. "Go home at once, and tell Miss Homoselle about it. She will never allow you to be sold." And he tried to move on.

But Chloe kept her ground. "Ole mars'r don't want to sell me, but he's 'bleeged to raise a heap o' money."

"How do you know?" he asked, looking at her keenly.

She was silenced for a moment, but her ready wit did not desert her. "I hearn de overseer talkin' 'bout it."

"But why do you come to me to buy you?"

"Cos, tho' I is willin' to be sold to git my marster de money, 'tain't everybody I'd like to b'long to. I *would* like to b'long to *you*."

"Oh! I see. You are willing to sacrifice yourself

to raise money for your master. But Mr. Despard has plenty of other property to dispose of, and I can't stop to hear his private affairs discussed. Let me pass."

"Please, Mars' Halsey, buy me," pleaded the sobbing girl. "Ef you don't, I'll have to marry Michael. *He'll* give ole mars'r money for me. I'll be a good servant to you, and mind every thing you tell me."

"But, Chloe, I cannot own a slave: I am an Englishman." Then, reflecting that this argument would convey no meaning to her mind, "I haven't the money to buy you if I would."

"I won't cost much, mars'r. The overseer say I am a likely young nigger, and will pay for myself in a little while."

Halsey winced at this market-valuation of human flesh and blood. "Yes; but in my country I cannot own a slave. If I bought you, I should set you free; but I have not the money. I have not much more than you have,—victuals and clothes. Moreover, I am sure your master will make the best provision for you. Go home, and don't talk such nonsense to any one else." So saying, he placed his hand on' the shoulder of the weeping girl, and gently turned her face homeward. Then he turned his own steps in the opposite direction to resume his walk to Westover, and was startled to see immediately in front of him the big, brawny figure of Michael, who had approached noiselessly over the soft, damp earth. It was impossible to mistake the expression of jealousy and hate on his repulsive black countenance. Halsey in-

stinctively tightened his grasp on his heavy walking-stick. Michael saw the movement, and passed on. Halsey turned to assure himself that Chloe would not be molested, and smiled to see, at quite a distance, the flutter of her dress and the flash of her heels. She had taken the alarm, and was fleeing through the woods with the speed of a frightened hare.

CHAPTER IX.

PHIL.

THE summer wore on, and Halsey came and went ; but no word of love passed his lips to either of the Despard girls.

The young men in the neighborhood, who at first had eyed him askance as a presumptuous foreigner, and a possible wooer of one of the Despards, began to think him a very good fellow, and entirely too impartial in his attentions for a lover.

Mr. Despard liked him cordially, and was grateful to him for waking up the old house, and amusing the young people ; and, though he was not disposed to look very closely into such matters, he did congratulate himself that the young man was discreet enough to make his attentions general, including even Skip, so that there was no danger of a love-affair.

One morning towards the end of July, Halsey came down to breakfast late. Major Carter, in dressing-gown and slippers, having finished his meal, was seated in his arm-chair by an open window, reading the paper and smoking a pipe.

The major in his daily life approximated the regularity of clock-work as nearly as it is possible for a human being to do. He eat, read, smoked, wound

up his watch, and went to bed, at the same time every day, winter and summer.

Living in the house with him so long, Halsey knew pretty well how he would find his friend occupied at any given hour. So this morning, when he came down at nine o'clock, he knew the major would be at his pipe and paper.

"Now, really, this is too bad. I am late again," said the young man, trying to look penitent, but his shining morning face showing nothing but freshness and good-humor.

The major only nodded with the odd half-smile which was his usual greeting to Halsey.

The dining-room at Westover was a large, cheerful room with a sunny exposure, but full of those incongruities so often seen in houses where there are no women to round off the sharp edges of things, and throw illusion over prosaic details. The furniture was old-fashioned, delicate, and spindle-legged; but the covering, which had not been renewed for fifty years, was worn and faded. The breakfast-table was bountifully, even luxuriously, supplied; but the waiters wore neither stockings nor shoes, and they kept off the flies with boughs of trees. Above the high, antiquated mantelpiece, surmounted with heavy silver candlesticks, and bristling with pipes, hung from a nail in the wall a smoke-stained almanac of the current year. The walls were covered with a gorgeous paper, representing Capt. Cook's voyage round the world, a design that gave the largest scope to the artist's imagination. Every variety of climate, from the frozen

seas of the North to the wild luxuriance of the tropics, was pictured there ; and every grade of humanity, from obsequious Frenchmen dressed in the height of some past fashion, making bows in terraced gardens, to savages in no dress at all, dancing in triumph round a dead enemy. The paper had been the wonder and delight of several generations of children ; and the major, who was the last representative of his race, remembered in his boyhood to have imbibed much of his spirit of adventure from his familiarity with Capt. Cook. The pictures, highly colored, and even grotesque, were very suggestive to the childish imagination, and prompted innumerable questions from an intelligent boy. Major Carter regarded them as having formed quite an important part of his education. Inquiries led naturally to reading every thing he could find about travels ; and from this central point radiated all the other branches of study that had delighted his youth.

Thus, for the sake of old association Capt. Cook's adventures remained in the Westover dining-room, much the worse for wear, and in some places actually hanging in strips from the walls.

Despite its air of faded aristocracy and glaring inconsistencies, it was a cheerful, habitable-looking apartment, and quite a paradise to a man who hated rooms filled with *bric-à-brac* that must not be touched, and gilt chairs not intended for use.

An Englishman's meals form no small item in life, and he is apt to go through with them with the calmness and deliberation worthy their importance. Hal-

sey eat his breakfast leisurely ; and, when he had finally topped off with a new-laid egg, he rose and said briskly, quite as though it were a new idea, " If you have no commands for me, major, I think I shall walk over to Dunmore while it is still cool, and see if the ladies would like to drive this morning."

" By all means, Halsey. I think you have said that same thing, or something like it, every morning for the last six weeks. What is to be the end of it all? "

Halsey was quite taken aback by the suddenness of the question.

" End? " he said, flushing and stammering. " I — I don't quite understand."

" Has Despard asked your intentions yet? "

" Indeed, no. Mr. Despard has the discernment to see that I am not in a position to have intentions. He is good enough to treat me quite as an *enfant de famille*."

" And is it possible you have not made love to either of the girls? "

" On my honor, no," said Halsey very gravely.

" Excuse me, my dear fellow," said the major, his mind reverting to the time when he was a gallant and susceptible young officer ; " but at your age I think I should have found it impossible to be constantly in the society of two such nice girls, without being spoony on one, or both."

" But at my age there was probably no reason why you should not be spoony as much as you pleased."

" Nonsense, boy. Do you mean to say that a young fellow like you falls or does not fall in love, according to reason? "

Halsey was silent a moment, then he answered slowly, "No, I do not ; but I do think a man's reason may prevent his trying to win a girl's love when it is impossible to marry her."

"It may up to a certain point," said the major oracularly, "but I think the only real safety is in keeping away from the girl. One can never tell when a hidden flame will burst forth."

Halsey laughed uneasily. "My dear major, why this caution now?"

"You may well ask. I should have given it long ago. I have just waked up to the fact that you are in danger."

"Never fear, my dear sir : I shall take care of myself."

"And the girls, is there no danger for them?"

Halsey's countenance cleared. "Not the least : I should as soon think of a butterfly falling in love as Miss Despard, and Miss Homoselle likes and treats me as a brother."

"All of which is very satisfactory. I see you are safe," said the major dryly, and he resumed his paper.

It would be impossible to say why Major Carter spoke in this way at this time. He could not, himself, have told whether some outside circumstance suggested the subject, or whether it was one of those prophetic intuitions we call presentiments.

Halsey went to Dunmore as usual, but his spirits had been dashed by his conversation with the major.

He walked through the woods slowly, kicking the pebbles from his path, deep in meditation. His

friend's words had suggested thoughts that he purposely kept at bay. "Yes, it is hard," he mused, "that the strength of man's youth should be wasted in unavailing regret ; but in my case there is no help for it, and there is an end of it."

He quickened his step, and tried to shake himself free of this unaccustomed mood, for he was not a man to brood over the inevitable. He had only partially succeeded when he arrived at Dunmore, where he found Homoselle on the lawn beneath the shade of her favorite elm, reading aloud to Bertie and Skip.

Her garden-hat was tilted over her eyes, which were bent on her book. Skip sprawled beside her, his chin supported by his hands while he listened intently. Bertie was yawning over her embroidery. Her quick eyes were the first to descry the new-comer. She motioned him quietly to her side, and he made one of Homoselle's audience some minutes before she was aware of it. At the first pause in the reading, Bertie, who had put on her glasses and scanned his face, said, "Why, Mr. Halsey, you are the knight of the rueful countenance to-day. What ails you?"

"I hope it is a guilty conscience for having stolen on me unawares," said Homoselle, closing her book with a snap.

"Not at all," said Halsey: "I hoped your reading would exorcise my evil spirit. I wish you would go on."

"Yes, Homo, do go on," urged Skip.

"So you confess to an evil spirit?" said Bertie.

"I confess to a fit of the blues."

"And you wish to be cured?"

"Naturally."

"It can't be done until the wind changes."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, we are going to have a storm some time to-day. I feel it in the air."

"And do you think one's spirits rise and fall with the barometer?"

"Mine do."

"O Bertie!" said Homoselle, "your spirits rise and fall a dozen times, while the barometer remains quite stationary."

Bertie laughed: "I believe they do. But for all that we are going to have a storm. I always feel creepy in advance."

"I assure you my spirits do not depend upon the weather," said Halsey, "but upon people. The major made me quite gloomy to-day. But I began to revive as soon as I entered this charmed circle."

"You so seldom make pretty speeches, you deserve a reward for that," said Bertie, tossing him a fragrant rose from her belt. "But I cannot understand the major making you gloomy. He is a crusty old bachelor, and often irritates but never depresses me."

"But you see, he has been reminding me in the most ruthless manner of some of my misfortunes. Like most men who have reached a certain age without marrying, he thinks a great deal about the holy estate, and sometimes twits me with not having a wife; and I get low-spirited over the prospect of never having one."

"Have you decided on the life of a celibate?"

"Bertie, what *is* a celibate?" asked Skip.

"It has been decided for me, I think," said Halsey, not heeding the interruption.

"You are profoundly mysterious."

"And yet I am thinking the most prosaic thoughts of how in this age one cannot marry on nothing a year."

"But you might furnish the sentiment, and the other party the income. Such things have been done," laughed Bertie.

"You mean, I might marry money? I don't know about that: I hardly think I should bring much in the market. No one has bid for me yet."

"I am glad you did not virtuously declare you would not marry a rich girl if you could: I have heard so many men say that, and then" —

"Go and do it?" asked Halsey, filling up the unfinished sentence.

"No, go and *try* to do it."

Halsey laughed. The conversation, as usual, had taken a personal turn, which Homoselle did not care to join in. Sitting on the greensward, she leaned for support against the trunk of the elm, idly plucking buttercups from the grass. Her hat shaded the upper part of her face, and Halsey could only see the rounded contour of her chin and the soft curves of her perfect lips. They drooped a little at the corners, and he fancied she looked pale.

"Miss Homoselle," he said, his voice softening as he spoke to her, "I am going down the river this even-

ing to see the haunted church you told me of. Will you go with me, and be my guide?"

Skip's eyes grew big and round as saucers at the word "haunted," and he waited for his cousin's reply with breathless interest.

"I am afraid I cannot go this evening. Bertie says we are going to have a storm."

"Jerusalem!" cried Skip, viciously kicking the ground. "That's just like a girl, to spoil everybody's fun. Mr. Horsely might see the miller's boy."

"And who may he be?" said Halsey, turning quickly to Skip to hide his disappointment.

"He's a ghost," answered Skip solemnly.

"Is it possible you have never heard of the miller's boy of Horn's Neck, Mr. Halsey?" asked Bertie.

"Never."

"Why, he is our local ghost, — that is, the principal one: we have several, — the 'sperrit' of a black boy murdered a hundred years ago, and the darkies are dreadfully afraid of him."

"Is the ghost of a black boy white?" asked Skip.

"I am sure I don't know; but, to be quite accurate, I think the miller's boy was yellow."

Halsey laughed: "If he continues to walk, I may make his acquaintance this evening. If so I will let you know his color, Skip."

Halsey was disappointed, not so much by Homoselle's refusal, for the reason assigned was sufficiently good, but by the want of responsiveness in her voice and manner. He had never felt it before, and he wondered if she were not well. Her pale cheeks

seemed to indicate that this might be so. It is often difficult to distinguish sadness from coldness. Homoselle was sad, she could not herself have told why. While he was thinking what he could say to her to make her throw back her hat and let him get a glimpse of her eyes, Bertie, who had been sweeping the horizon with her glasses, started up, and, clapping her hands, cried in a tone of unmistakable delight, "Phil!"

All eyes turned in the direction hers had taken, and saw coming across the grass a handsome young man, whose light step and smiling countenance gave promise of a pleasant addition to the party.

Homoselle echoed Bertie's delighted "Phil!" and Skip was boisterous in his welcome, shouting "Phil!" at the top of his voice. All three hastened to meet the coming man, and Halsey felt like the favorite of the hour suddenly deserted by a fickle populace. He had often heard of this cousin Phil Roy, who had been absent for several months; and he was obliged to confess, that, as far as appearances were concerned, cousin Phil was a very attractive person. The stranger was introduced; and, as the two men shook hands, it was curious to observe the strong contrast they presented.

Phil was not so tall as Halsey, but much more slender; the latter giving one the idea of massive, imperturbable strength, whereas Phil was full of grace and activity. The features of Halsey's fresh, ruddy countenance were hewn in broad, masculine lines of comeliness; while Phil's were clear-cut and delicately chiselled, and his pale olive complexion bore no trace of the English roses, white and red, that formed so

large a part of Halsey's good looks. Halsey looked at you with an expression of clear, steadfast serenity, while the light in Phil's dark eyes varied with every mood and thought. Never were two men more different; and yet Bertie, who made a rapid mental inventory of their merits, decided that each was good after his kind.

Halsey did not remain long after the advent of the new-comer. He went away out of sorts with himself, and dissatisfied with his visit.

"Don't go on the river this evening," said Bertie, pointing to the sky, as he took his leave: "see, yonder is the proverbial little cloud no bigger than a man's hand."

"Reserve the ghosts for another time, when we can go with you," said Homoselle, recovering her usual cordial manner, and giving him her hand as she bade him good-by.

"Where did you pick up that grenadier of a fellow?" said Phil, as soon as he was out of sight.

"He is a friend of Major Carter's. What do you think of him?" asked Bertie.

"Conceited."

"That is what all the men say, but it is not so," said Homoselle.

"Then, why does he throw his head back, and look at a fellow as though his eyes were under his chin?" asked Phil.

"He is so absurdly tall, it gives him a little supercilious air; but he doesn't mean it," said Bertie soothingly.

"Very kind of him, I am sure. How long has he been here? He seems quite domesticated."

"Nearly two months."

"Two months! Humph!"

"Isn't he handsome?"

"Well, yes, I suppose he is just the style women call handsome, — big and high-colored."

"Oh! you don't like him because he 'gorgonized you with a horrid British stare,'" said Bertie.

Phil laughed. "Now I know I am at home, and that you are Bertie. I haven't heard a quotation since I have been gone. No, I did not mind his stare, but I don't like foreigners; and I do mind his coming here and falling in love with one of my cousins."

"Now you are entirely wrong: he is nothing more than kind and friendly," said Homoselle.

"Pooh! he sat here ten minutes, and in that time I discovered his secret."

Phil was an expert in love-affairs.

"Do tell us," said Bertie, lowering her eyes, and scrutinizing her gloves.

"No: it is more interesting to find out such things for one's self, and I won't deprive you of the pleasure. And now, girls, tell me about yourselves. Bertie, you are the same cousin I left behind me, but I find a changed and improved Homoselle. As to Skip, the rascal, he has new gaps in his teeth, and his trousers are growing short."

Bertie proved a true weather-prophet. The storm she had foretold came up about five o'clock in the

afternoon, with a high wind, and heavy scudding clouds. It increased rapidly in violence ; the heavens grew black, the rain poured, and the wind raged so violently that men began to shake their heads, and talk ominously about the light craft on the river and the ships at sea.

It continued so long, that it had not entirely subsided when Homoselle went up-stairs to bed.

She sat in the window-seat for some time, watching the black, swollen river, and listening to the sougling of the wind as it sobbed itself to rest. At last the stars began to tremble out, and the moon to shed her soft light like a benediction of peace over the troubled waters and the storm-swept earth. Homoselle went to her rest with devout thanksgiving that none of those she cared for had been on the river that evening.

CHAPTER X.

THE HAUNTED CHURCH.

THERE is an element of melancholy interest about the ruins of the New World that does not attach to those of the Old. The latter connect us with the remote past ; and we wonder, while we rejoice, that they have so long survived to tell their pathetic tale of vanished greatness. But a ruin in America, of what was evidently intended by its founders to endure for ages, saddens us that it has so soon gone to decay.

In one of the lower counties of Virginia there stands, not far from the river, an old church, dilapidated and long deserted, but probably more beautiful in its decay than it was in its youth. It had been a fine church in its day too, — solidly built of English brick, with porch and tower and belfry, after the rural English pattern. Only the roof and walls remained standing now ; and the materials of which they were composed were scarcely visible.

Year by year Nature had been gently covering with verdure the breaches made by time and neglect, until now the building seemed a part of her own handiwork. The ivy, the trumpet-flower, and the beautiful Virginian creeper clambered over the rough cruciform walls, mantling them with green and russet and crimson,

festooning the empty window-spaces, wreathing the broken columns, and hanging garlands from gable, roof, and tower.

The voice of prayer and praise, that once filled the mouldering arches, had given place to the melancholy chant of the bat and the owl; and the first worshippers were taking their long rest in the adjacent churchyard.

Many a green hillock, and broken, moss-covered tablet, was scattered here and there in the shadow of the old ruin. God's house and God's acre had long been deserted by men; but his lesser creatures had clothed them with beauty, and made them vocal with song.

Many causes had contributed to the disuse of the old church; the confiscation of the glebe, the unhealthiness of the locality, and the gradual removal from the neighborhood of the class of persons who attended its services, being among the chief.

Travellers and strangers, to whom the ruin was always pointed out as one of the most interesting relics of colonial times, were never surprised to hear that it had also the reputation of being haunted. Sombre, desolate, surrounded by neglected graves, it was the place, beyond all others, where the superstitious imagination might run riot. The negroes had given the spot a very bad name. They reported mysterious lights and sounds as of nightly occurrence, and even in the daytime they would make a detour of miles rather than go near it.

This was the haunted church of which Homoselle

had spoken to Halsey, and they had long planned an expedition to visit it together.

But the expedition had never taken place ; and Halsey decided, that, in spite of Bertie's promised storm, he would go that evening, and explore the ruins by himself. It need not prevent his going again, with Homoselle, whenever she was ready.

The church was several miles distant, a pleasant sail for a summer afternoon ; and Halsey wanted to be doing something. He felt as if he must work off the irritation he was harboring against somebody, he did not know whom, — the major, or Phil, or Homoselle, or all three.

He left Westover early in the afternoon, saying he was going to see what the ghosts were about, and should be back to tea.

The major, standing on the long portico, looked up at the sky. "Do you think," he asked, "that you quite understand how to manage 'The Cyrilla'? If not, should a gust come up, you will be likely to remain among the ghosts."

"Manage her !" cried Halsey, who was a University man, and thought he knew all about boats, as well as about most other things : "I could take her across the Atlantic in an equinoctial gale."

The major shook his head doubtfully.

The boats, called canoes, used here on the river and bay, were very different from any craft that Halsey had been accustomed to handle on the other side of the Atlantic. They were long, low, and narrow, usually with two masts, and small triangular sails ; lineal

descendants of the old Indian dug-outs, that, manned by red men, shot swiftly and silently over the Virginian waters when they were still shaded by virgin forests.

“The Cyrilla” was a small boat, well suited to her softly-gliding name. Trim, arrowy, long in proportion to her breadth, which was scarcely three feet, with clean, daintily-curved lines, she sped through the water with incredible swiftness before a steady breeze; but her management required some knowledge and skill in shifting, uncertain winds.

Halsey set out with the wind in his favor, and “The Cyrilla” flew on her course like a great white-winged butterfly. The air, with a piquant flavor of salt from the bay, was so cool and bracing, it soon swept his blue devils away.

The turbid James, shining like molten gold in the yellow light of the afternoon sun, rolled on, kissing the smiling shore, and bearing its likeness on his broad breast.

Arriving at the church, Halsey was far more impressed by its melancholy beauty than he had anticipated. He had explored so many ruins in his travels, that he hardly expected to find much of interest in one that did not count its age by centuries. But he experienced new emotions as he looked on this crumbling relic of an English settlement in the New World.

Here, on this deserted spot, Englishmen — and he thrilled to think what men they were that laid the foundations of the great Republic — had set up an altar which even in its decay testified to their faith and hope; and now Nature was throwing a veil over

the ruin, and tenderly hiding its crumbling walls with her own freshness and beauty.

The young man could not fail to be touched by these associations.

Before entering the church he wandered thoughtfully among the graves, deciphering the old epitaphs, most of which recorded good homely English names of men and women who were born in England, but who had found their last resting-place on the distant shores of America. He took out a pencil and sketch-book, and, sitting on a broken tombstone, made a rapid sketch of the ivy-mantled tower and some fine old trees that grew near its entrance. Finally, with uncovered head, he reverently entered the deserted temple, and looked around on the scene of desolation it presented. The building was a mere shell, which had long ago been despoiled of its pews and other wood-work, either for fire-wood or from sheer wantonness.

But, as Halsey examined the place more closely, it seemed to him that the interior was scarcely as wild and desolate in appearance as the exterior had led him to expect. He thought he discovered traces of human life about the old ruin.

The dank weeds and grass, that grew between the flagstones of the flooring, were trodden down as if by many feet. At first he suspected that stray cattle or sheep found shelter here; but a nearer inspection revealed distinct impressions, here and there, of naked human feet. Ascending a few stone steps that led to the raised portion of the church, where the altar once

stood, a ray of light from the setting sun, shining through the open doorway directly opposite, fell on a small white object in a crevice between the steps. Stooping down to see what it was, he found a tallow-candle end. He was at once reminded of the ghosts, which he had forgotten until now, and of the mysterious lights that were reported to be seen in the church at night.

"Truly," he said to himself, "the ghosts have large feet, and use gross materials for illuminating."

He was absorbed in the train of thought suggested by this circumstance, when the fading light reminded him that it was growing late. He returned to the boat with the intention of going home, but the beauty of the afternoon lured him farther down the river.

"When I wish to go back," he thought, "I shall have a fair wind; and, with a free sheet, my gallant little bark will get me home in a twinkling."

He floated on and on, bathed in a delicious golden atmosphere, dreaming of a pair of eyes blue as "summer pools," reflecting heaven in their depths, until the declining sun reminded him, that, unless he hastened to return, the major would sup as companionless that night as he had breakfasted in the morning.

Turning his face homeward, "The Cyrilla," with her two wings spread before the breeze, was soon gliding swiftly over the water in the direction of Westover. She had not proceeded far when Halsey suddenly became conscious that she had paused in her flight, and the southerly wind had fallen with an abruptness that surprised him. It had not languished and gone

down gradually, but seemed to expire with a gasp, a few light puffs, and then a dead calm. The rays of the setting sun fell upon the water with blinding intensity. Far up the river, and almost in the shadow of the high bluff to the westward, he saw a large schooner, with sails close furled, being towed still nearer to the shore by a small rowboat, the rowers pulling with an energy ill suited to the sultriness of the weather. As Halsey watched them he thought, "What impatient fellows these Americans are ! a little waiting, and the storm would carry them whither they are going."

Had he been better acquainted with the waters in which he sailed, he, too, would have sought the protecting lee of the high bluff ; nor would he have been surprised by the suddenness with which the wind dropped, but would have recognized a certain forerunner of one of the violent storms so frequent in this semi-tropical climate. As it was, he contented himself with furling his mainsail, and unstepping its mast. Then, with the foresail still spread, he waited the approach of the storm to waft him on his homeward way. Nor had he long to wait. The cloud lifted, the sun sank behind its dark curtain, the gold vanished from the river, and a solemn stillness fell upon the shore where the trees stood black and motionless in the sultry twilight.

Then he saw a dark line on the water to the westward, and the first breath of wind from the cloud fanned his brow with its refreshing coolness. The sail filled, and the rippling water murmured melodiously along the white sides of the gently-moving "Cyrilla."

The next moment a blinding flash of lightning, a crash of thunder, and the storm was upon him. In an instant "The Cyrilla" was thrown on her beam-ends, and the water poured in over her lee gunwale.

Halsey, releasing his hold upon the helm, instinctively sprang to the weather-quarter; and it was fortunate he did so, for his weight on the upper side in some degree counterbalanced the force of the gale, and, the helm being free, she quickly luffed herself up into the eye of the wind. The next moment the boat fell on the other tack; and again the tempest caught her sail, and threw her on her side.

Halsey now saw that it was a struggle for life. But he was not easily discouraged, and it was a struggle he would not lightly surrender.

He seized the helm again, and discovered that by keeping the sail close hauled, luffing a little when the heavy flaws of wind struck, he could just keep the gunwale out of the water. Although thus safe for the moment, he fully realized his peril, and felt all the impotence of ignorance. He knew, should it become necessary to change his course, his want of skill would insure disaster.

While he rated his own powers so low, in the midst of his gravest apprehensions, he could not help admiring the speed and sea-going qualities of "The Cyrilla." She fairly flew through the water; and, as flaw after flaw struck her, she would settle down to her bearings with the grace and dignity of a sloop-of-war. Sailing with her sail close hauled, the boat's course was directly in the teeth of the storm; and the rapidity of

her motion threw the spray over the bow with stinging force into Halsey's face.

Night was fast approaching ; the rain fell in torrents ; and, as gust after gust swept over her, "The Cyrilla" buried her side deeper and deeper in the water, and then slowly rose all dripping from the waves. The mast bent like a reed, and Halsey could feel beneath his hand the rudder quiver with the fierce rush of water along her keel. One more blast of the tempest, and "The Cyrilla" lay with her sail flat upon the water. The next moment it disappeared, and Halsey found himself clinging to the upturned bottom of the boat ; and he knew it needed but another movement of the storm to launch him into eternity.

CHAPTER XI.

PICKED UP.

MEANWHILE the major at home was a prey to the keenest anxiety.

At tea-time the storm was at its height ; and the servants waiting at table, by way of improving matters, looked uncomfortably solemn, saying "it was an awful night, and dey didn't know what was gwine 'come of Mars' Halsey."

"Hold your tongues, you black rascals : Mr. Halsey knows what he is about," thundered the major ; but his heart belied the valor of his words.

Ten o'clock and bed-time came without bringing the young man.

The major sat up until midnight, and then went to his room, miserable and almost hopeless. Morning dawned fresh and fair, well washed by the heavy rain of the night before.

Nature seemed to have put on her gala dress. The blue, smiling heavens shone without a cloud ; the river sparkled joyously, dimpling under the soft caress of the vagrant breeze ; while grass and leaf and flower looked as if they had been dipped anew in beautiful and vivid colors.

The major rose from his bed, where he had not

slept, and wandered disconsolately about the house. His pipe and his paper had no longer any solace for him.

His young friend's belongings met him at every turn. His sketching-apparatus, his guns, his canes and fishing-rods, even his boots and slippers, had a mute eloquence that intensified the old soldier's grief.

The rumor soon reached Dunmore, that Halsey had gone sailing on the river the evening before, and had not returned.

The news, of course, was received with consternation. Mr. Despard went at once to Westover to see if it was true, and found the major nearly beside himself with grief. He could not be made to see that there was the least ground for hope.

Bertie ran, wringing her hands, to Homoselle : " Oh ! they say Mr. Halsey is drowned. He was out in that terrific storm yesterday, in a nasty little boat, and nothing has been heard of him since."

She was so excited, she did not notice that her niece seemed stunned by the intelligence.

Homoselle put her hand to her head in a bewildered kind of way, while a contraction of pain passed over her features.

" Drowned ! " she gasped, — " drowned ? "

" Oh, it is too terrible ! " cried Bertie, burying her face in her hands, and sobbing outright. " Such a splendid, manly young fellow, and here with us only yesterday ! "

Homoselle sat and looked on like one in a dream : she neither moved nor spoke. After a while she got

up, and went about her usual avocations, and Bertie did not see her again until luncheon.

At luncheon she was pale and silent: there were dark rings around her eyes, and her brow was still contracted, apparently with pain. She eat nothing, and assigned a bad headache as the cause.

Bertie, who always cried out when she was hurt, looked at her with astonishment, and decided that she was as cold and unimpressionable as marble. Even Mr. Despard thought his daughter singularly undemonstrative about the uncertainty of Halsey's fate.

Bertie could not keep still. She tried her needle, then a book, and at last took refuge in that solace of a restless woman's heart, a rocking-chair. She sat by the drawing-room window, rocking back and forth, with her eyes fixed on the walk leading up from the river, hoping some one would come who could bring her news. Every thing was bright and warm and still out of doors. No one was moving about at this hour; though Bertie descried at a distance a solitary, immovable figure on the horseblock, — a figure with the head bowed on the knees, round which the arms were clasped. As well as Bertie's near-sighted eyes could make out, it was Chloe; and she was touched by the attitude of unmistakable grief. The tears started to her eyes, as she murmured, "Even the servants were fond of him."

While she gazed sadly out of the front window on the pathway by which she had so often watched Halsey come up to the house, some one who had approached from the rear entered the drawing-room.

Looking up, she saw Phil's dark, handsome face smiling down on her woe-begone countenance, with an expression that showed he had no gloomy forebodings.

"What on earth is the matter?" he said. "One would think you were all mutes at a funeral. Even the darkies seem to have put on an extra amount of black. Is great Pan dead?"

"O Phil! have you not heard? Mr. Halsey" —

"My prophetic soul! I thought it must be something about that great hulking Englishman. He seems to have bounded the horizon of everybody's ideas. It is Halsey this, and Halsey that. *Figaro ci, Figaro là.*"

"Come, Phil, this is no joking matter."

"I should say not. Had I known the fellow was coming to Prince George, I should never have gone away. I come back, and find myself nobody."

"Ah! but he has gone forever, I am afraid. He'll not trouble you or anybody else again."

"If he has gone back to England, you can't expect me to be sorry. America, especially the girls, for Americans, is my political creed."

"Now, do be quiet. This is a very serious matter. Mr. Halsey was out on the river last night in the storm, and nothing has been heard of him since. We can but fear that he is lost."

Phil's smiling face became grave and full of interest. "This *is* indeed a serious matter," he said; "but don't be too down-hearted, Bertie, for there are many chances for his safety that you have not thought

of. I have been too often in such scrapes myself, not to know all about them. The river, you know, is our great highway, and vessels of every kind are constantly passing and repassing. It is not only possible, but very probable, that he has been picked up, and, for aught we know, he may now be on his way to Rio ; and," he added mischievously, "*I* should not be sorry if we were only sure of it."

"Phil, you are the same dear, delightful fellow you always were, and have given me more comfort in five minutes than everybody else put together. But what are you going to do?"

"Going to the boat-landing to see if I can learn any thing ; if not, then down the river to look for traces of 'The Cyrilla.'

"That's right," cried Bertie. "I want somebody to be doing something. It is so terrible to sit here and do nothing when one is full of anxiety !"

As Phil was leaving the house, Homoselle, who had been lying on the sofa in the little room adjoining the drawing-room, and heard the conversation, came out into the hall.

"Phil," she said softly, and he was startled to see her white face, and the dark lines under her beautiful eyes which seemed to emphasize their expression of suffering, — "Phil," clasping her hands round one of his arms, and raising her lips to his as she used to do as a child bidding him good-night, "I did not tell you yesterday, because I did not know then, how glad I am that you have come back."

The young man dropped a kiss as soft and light as

a snowflake on the upturned face, and left the house without looking behind him.

Had Diana stepped down from her pedestal, and put up her mouth to be kissed, he could not have been more astonished.

“Thunder!” he exclaimed. “But it was not me she kissed: it was that beefy Englishman. She heard me say I was going in search of him. And how beautiful she looked!—her face like a lily, and her sad eyes like crushed violets. Is it possible she was always beautiful, and I did not perceive it until I saw that fellow devouring her with his great stupid eyes? No, something has waked her up. Homoselle has grown beautiful with a royal beauty. She looks a queen among women.”

Phil's brain was in a whirl as he walked rapidly along the river-bank. Something had waked *him* up.

Phil Roy was one of the most fortunate men in the world, — young, handsome, rich, sufficiently clever, and as little spoiled as possible with these attributes. He enjoyed his wealth rationally, but valued his personal attractions higher; and it was for these latter advantages that he desired to be esteemed by others. Every thing that makes life pleasant had hitherto come to him so easily that he missed the spur of obstacle and difficulty to urge him to any great effort; and he was generally called an indolent man.

Curiously enough, he felt an immediate antagonism for Halsey, not exactly personally, but as an admirer of Homoselle.

Up to this time he had regarded Homoselle simply

as one of a host of pretty cousins, of whom he was very fond ; a nice, good girl, but not especially interesting.

Halsey's evident admiration put her in a new light. Indeed, she had visibly improved since Phil went away. She was quite young enough to expand, like an opening flower, every day, in grace and beauty ; and Halsey's cordial friendship and appreciation had done much to bring her out.

The attitude of Phil's mind at present was, that it was a pity for so nice a girl, a cousin of his too, to become interested in a foreigner, and one not in a position to marry ; for Bertie had told him, with a blush, what Halsey had said about the impossibility of marrying on nothing a year.

Musing thus, he felt quite a glow of self-approbation : was he not looking after the peace of his cousin Homoselle's heart, and at the same time taking a philanthropic interest in the safety of Halsey's body ?

All this time Skip was taking Halsey's disaster very coolly : either he did not fully appreciate his friend's danger, or, being one-idead, like most children, was too much occupied with his latest hobby to give much thought to any thing else. Halsey, though still one of his chief favorites, had lost the freshness of novelty ; and the boy's absorbing passion now was the puppy he had brought home from the miller's.

It was a Skye terrier of famous breed, and the best of the litter, thanks to Halsey's selection.

The little creature was so young, so round and shaggy, when Skip came into possession, it looked like

nothing so much as a pair of soft brown eyes shining out of a ball of tangled gray silk.

Its beauty and infantine helplessness brought out all the maternal in Skip's heart. He petted it from morning until night, and would have fed it every minute in the day, had the dog, fortunately, not possessed more sense than the boy, and refused to eat except when he was hungry.

One day Homoselle actually caught Skip talking baby-talk to the fluffy little beast: —

“Dash trouble you? Naughty Dash sha'n't trouble de most bufer itty dog in de world.”

Seeing his cousin, he changed his note to something quite mannish. “O Homo! isn't he a beauty? Watson says there's no doubt about his thoroughbredness. I don't know yet what to call him. Do you think Smoke would be a good name? Mr. Halsey told the miller he was real smoke-color.”

“I think,” said Homoselle, smiling, and tapping the “bufer itty dog” with the tip of her slipper, “he requires so much petting and nursing, I should call him the Baby.”

Skip scouted the idea; but the name stuck, and, like so many names given in derision, became a title of honor.

And where was Halsey all this time? Steaming leisurely, after the Southern mode of travel, up the river from Norfolk, where he had landed unpremeditatedly the night before, he could not restrain his impatience as he watched the steamboat's laggard pace. His thoughts flew on before: how he longed

to assure the major of his safety ; how he wondered if Bertie and Homoselle had been troubled by his absence !

When at last the boat touched at Westover, the entire negro population of the place seemed to have assembled on the wharf, drawn thither by a desire to learn something of his fate.

Halsey's heart swelled at the sight of their tumultuous joy on seeing him again.

"Glory be to de Lord ! Hallelujah ! De lost is foun', de dead is 'live agin !" cried one white-headed patriarch.

"Run, Sam, tell de major Mars' Halsey done come home, safe and soun'," cried another to one of the major's retrievers.

Halsey shook hands all round ; and the friendly grasp of those black, toil-hardened hands brought tears to his eyes.

He found the major pale and feeble, suffering from the violent palpitation of the heart that so often afflicted him, and unable to leave his chair. The dry, pleasant smile with which he always greeted Halsey, curled his gray moustache, and he leaned his head back with a long-drawn sigh of satisfaction.

Halsey, with the consideration of a woman, avoided making any demonstration beyond taking a seat near his old friend, and quietly recounting his adventures since they parted.

With grave simplicity he related how, when he thought his last moment had come, and had steadied his nerves to meet the shock, he saw, like twin stars

of hope, the side-lights of a steamer slowly advancing towards him through the storm ; how at once his resignation to death gave way to a passionate desire to live ; how his wild cry for help actually made itself heard above the roar of the tempest, the din of machinery, and the rush of waters ; and, finally, how he was rescued by the officers of the boat, which proved to be the steamer making its regular daily trip between Richmond and Norfolk.

“And now, my dear major,” he added, “you may write me down an ass, a conceited Englishman, or any thing abominable you choose, if ever I undertake to navigate your waters alone in a storm again.”

The major nodded : “You must go to the Despards now, and let them know my bad penny has turned up again,” he said slowly, and with effort. “Despard was here himself, this morning, to make inquiry about you. He said he thought the boat would bring news of you, but I did not agree with him.”

Halsey put himself into fresh clothing as quickly as possible, and went to Dunmore. He took the path through the wood, and so missed Phil, who had gone in search of him by the river-bank.

Chloe was the first to see him ; but she did not dare to interrupt his quick, eager walk to the house. He passed by without perceiving her ; and she ran to the stables, where she embraced Skip, Dash, and the Baby.

Mr. Despard and Bertie were on the portico when he reached the house. Bertie with a scream of delight caught him by both hands, and welcomed him with an April face of smiles and tears.

"If I were not so glad to see you safe, I should never forgive you for giving us such a fright. 'Me-thought what pain it was to drown,'" she said with a laugh and a shudder.

"Halsey, my lad," said Mr. Despard affectionately, "it is worth while being slightly shipwrecked, to discover one's importance. We have been thrown into the greatest consternation and affliction by your absence."

"Yes," said Bertie, her spirits bubbling up now that her anxiety was removed, like champagne on the withdrawal of the cork. "Had the bark that held our prince gone down, we should never have smiled again."

Halsey could not reply except by giving her little hands a squeeze.

They went into the house, and found Homoselle in the drawing-room.

As soon as she saw Halsey, she rose hastily from her seat, with her hands extended, and her lips parted with a joyous smile. A vivid line of color flamed along her left cheek, which receded as quickly as it came, leaving her deathly pale. Withdrawing her hands from his gentle clasp, she buried her face in them, and burst into tears.

So nature avenged itself for the stoical self-repression with which she had been concealing her anxiety all day.

Halsey felt his own tears well up in response, deep calling unto deep; but he could say nothing. Mr. Despard was as much surprised by Homoselle's agi-

tation now as he had been by her undemonstrativeness in the morning. Girls were such queer cattle. He explained how she had not been well, and sent Bertie for the salts.

Halsey went away.

In the presence of Death the secrets of all hearts are opened. Yesterday, in that presence, Halsey had discovered the true meaning of his sentiments towards Homoselle. To-day he exulted in the sweet hope that his danger had awakened some tenderness in her heart for him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROSE-BOWER.

THE following morning Halsey went to Dunmore ; and as the hall-door, like that of most Southern country-houses, stood ever hospitably open, he entered without announcing himself, and wandered over the lower floor in search of some one.

Finding nobody, he decided to reconnoitre the grounds before summoning a servant. He had no better luck out of doors, until he thought of the stables, where he found Skip in the yard, having a fisticuff with Homoselle's little dining-room servant Tommy, about a watermelon that lay in the grass near by, looking tempting enough with its green rind and crimson heart glistening with the coolness imparted by a night in the ice-house. Skip was getting the worst of the encounter when Halsey made an opportune appearance.

He called off the dogs of war by sending Tommy in search of a glove he thought he had dropped on the lawn, and engaging Skip in conversation. "Oh, Mr. Horsely!" began the latter, red and panting from his tussle, "I was just thrashin' Tommy for bein' so greedy. He's just eat up one watermelon, and he wanted this other, and I wasn't goin' to let him have it."

"And you are quite right. Two watermelons are enough to give the brat the cholera, even if he found room to stow them away, which seems improbable," said Halsey, putting up his eye-glass, and gauging first the size of the watermelon, and then that of Tommy's retreating figure.

"Mr. Horsely, please tell me about the haunted church," said Skip, forgetting Tommy in a more absorbing interest. "Did you see the miller's boy?" dropping his voice to a whisper.

"Not a sign of him."

"Didn't you see any thing?"

"Yes, I saw something."

"Goody!" exclaimed Skip, coming nearer, with round eyes. "What was it like?"

"It was something white."

"My! What was it?"

"A bit of tallow."

"Pshaw!" cried Skip in deep disgust.

"But where is everybody?" asked Halsey.

"Uncle Frank is on the farm somewhere, and there's Bertie," replied Skip, nodding towards the house, where they could see the flutter of a white dress on the back porch.

"Oh!" ejaculated Halsey rather vacantly.

Skip grinned, and looked up in the young man's face with a knowing wink, for which the latter could have thrashed him.

"What will you give me if I tell you where *everybody* is?" said the boy, pushing back his ragged straw hat, and displaying an eager, commercial expression of countenance.

"You want to make a trade?"

Skip nodded.

"My stick?"

Skip studied Halsey's cane with its pretty carved handle for some time, but finally shook his head.

"What then?"

"An English shillin' with Vic's head on it."

Halsey laughed. "Why, you are not such a republican, after all. But you will never make your fortune at this rate. The stick is worth many shillings," he said, taking out his pocket-book, and wincing a little under the fire of Skip's laughing eyes, as he held up a shilling. "Now, then!"

Skip's eyes gleamed at the sight of the bright new coin, but he was in no hurry.

"*Everybody* told Chloe she was goin' out; nowhere in particular, but I saw which way *everybody* went," he said coolly.

"To the woods?" asked Halsey carelessly.

"No."

"To the dairy?"

"No."

"Ah! well, I will call another day," said Halsey, putting the shilling back in his pocket-book, and turning to go.

"You are in a tremendous hurry. Can't you wait a *minute*?" cried Skip, holding out his hand for the money. "*Everybody* has gone to the summer-house; he, he!"

Halsey tossed him the shilling, and turned on his heel.

In an out-of-the-way corner of the Dunmore garden, stood an old, tumble-down summer-house, covered with sweet climbing-roses. Its one entrance overlooked the river, and shut out the rest of the world, thus making a pleasant retreat in which to taste the sweets of solitude.

It had formerly been a famous place for wooing and winning, and all that sort of thing. Mr. Despard said more matches had been made in "the bower of roses," as the idiots were apt to call it, than any place he knew of; and there were many middle-aged couples living, who never looked at it without a sentimental sigh as the spot where, for them, the poetry of life had begun and — ended.

One luckless youth, who met there an adverse fate in days so long past that his very name was forgotten, had carved above the door, in Italian, the well-known words from Dante, "Who enters here leaves hope behind."

Bertie, being afraid of slugs, earwigs, and all creeping things, never entered the summer-house. She preferred taking her sentiment comfortably in a drawing-room, or behind fleet horses; and since her day the bower of roses had fallen into disuse as a trysting-place.

Homoselle, who had not been troubled with suitors, sometimes took refuge there to escape from Skip and the servants, or to avoid unwelcome visitors. She was there the morning after Halsey's adventure, gazing dreamily at the river, and the ships going out to sea. The light in her eyes and the freshness of her cheeks

showed that she had recovered from her headache of yesterday. Her broad-brimmed hat was tied gypsy-fashion, closely under her chin. Like most Southern girls, she dreaded the effect of the Southern sun, and the only sign she gave of personal vanity was the extreme care she took of her complexion. Indeed, the statuesque simplicity of her style greatly depended on the evenness of her coloring, and she was very careful that its purity should not be marred by sun-burn or freckles. Her parasols and veils were the source of endless teasing from her father, who declared that she had broken the knees of a favorite horse by riding into a ditch when she was blindfolded with half a dozen veils.

But Homoselle had not thought of her complexion to-day. She tied on her hat mechanically, and stole away to the summer-house, taking every precaution to keep her whereabouts a secret. She wanted to be alone, to think, perhaps to pray,—for her finger was between the leaves of a book of devotion,—but somehow her thoughts would not mount upward. Like the smoke from the chimneys, here and there, that did not rise buoyantly into the clear upper air as usual, but which, from some atmospheric influence, fell and hovered over the earth, so her mind was irresistibly withdrawn from the contemplation of heaven to the memory of an honest, handsome face framed in nut-brown hair and beard, and illuminated by a pair of nut-brown eyes.

The murder was out: she knew at last that she loved this face, and had given her heart away un-

asked. Waves of hot blushes swept over her as she wondered if her emotions of yesterday had led any one to suspect her secret. However that might be, she easily resolved to die rather than show any sign that would confirm such suspicion, — death, at her age, being the simplest way out of a difficulty. Even as she thought these things, she heard the crunching of the gravel on the walk outside ; and immediately her visor came down, and she was clothed in the full panoply of maidenly reserve, although she anticipated no more serious interruption than an emissary from the cook asking what there was for dinner. She had only time to slip her book into her pocket, when the little window of the summer-house was darkened ; and, looking up, she saw the very face she had been thinking of, quietly reposing on a pair of folded arms, and the brown eyes shining serenely down on her.

“So I have found you !” said the intruder, his voice indicating the search he had made, and the satisfaction crowning his success.

“I did not know that I had been lost,” said Homoselle with a cool friendliness, that was as sweet and distant as the perfume of flowers wafted from the other side of the river.

“What a pretty, tumble-down arbor this is !” said Halsey, coming round to the door, and looking up at the decaying lattice-work, interwoven with luxuriant vines and showers of fragrant roses. “May I come in ?”

“I am afraid it is hardly high enough for you to stand upright.”

"But I do not purpose standing upright! May I not sit down?"

"Certainly," said Homoselle, gathering up her skirts and brushing some dead leaves from the bench, "if you are not afraid of cobwebs and spiders."

"I am much more afraid of these ill-omened words," pausing a moment to decipher the blackened letters above the door. "Who could have put such a sentiment here? As I came up the walk, I thought your summer-house looked like a shrine: but this inscription gives it the air of a tomb; or, rather, I took it for a paradise, and some other fellow seems to have found it an *Inferno*." And Halsey, not yet perceiving Homoselle's cool, grand air, laughed good-humoredly at his own conceits.

"Tradition," she replied, "says the inscription was put there by a love-sick youth. Luckily such have gone out of fashion."

"Have they, though?" said Halsey incredulously, as he took his seat beside her. "And now may I scold you a little?"

"Of course: that is one of the privileges of friendship. But what can you have to scold me about? Have I not been exemplary of late?"

"Yes, until to-day."

"To-day! Is it possible that I have offended in the last ten minutes?"

"No. But I think you broke a promise before I came."

"What do you mean?" she asked, really puzzled by his accusation.

“Long ago, when we made our compact of friendship, you promised that you would never run away from me again.”

“How *could* I run away from you when I did not know you were here?” she asked lightly, with the same distant sweetness with which she had received him.

Halsey bit his lip: he was not accustomed to this kind of thing. With his usual directness he was going straight at an object; and he found his way impeded by a barrier, invisible but palpable, like a wire fence, that reveals all the temptingness of the fruit, while it effectually keeps out the intruder.

Men are masterful creatures. They delay speaking until it suits their pleasure, and then women must straightway listen and respond; and the pity of it is, they often do.

“Did you not *know* that I would be here to-day?”

“Of course I hoped you would come as usual, but I could not tell at what time. This is rather early, is it not?” looking at her watch.

“You were not well yesterday: did you not suppose I would be here the first thing this morning to inquire about you?”

Homoselle flushed up at this. It reminded her of her unlucky tears.

“Oh! my headache is quite gone,” she answered airily. “And you, have you recovered from your misadventure?”

Halsey made a motion of impatience. “Homoselle!” he cried in a deep, tender voice that stirred

her soul with its vibrations, like the first note of a great cathedral bell. She turned her head away, that he might not read her countenance. It was her first unguarded movement, and he was quick to see its import. "Homoselle," he repeated softly, "why will you not let me speak? I have come on purpose to tell you that I love you, and you have made me lose several precious moments already."

His words were almost abrupt, but his kindling eyes and unsteady voice were eloquent enough.

"I am sorry to have wasted your time," she answered coldly, "but you must not tell me that you love me."

"Not tell you? But I must tell you. It is the one thing I have to say. Every feeling, every hope, that I have, is centred in the fact that I love you. Why must I not tell you so?"

He had found his tongue, and spoke with a warmth and vehemence that delighted while it frightened her. She looked steadily before her, not daring to meet the fire in his eyes.

"You must not tell me because — because, I am sure you are — mistaken."

This was not exactly what she had intended to say, but it conveyed her meaning quite as well as a more conventional speech.

Halsey looked puzzled and hurt. "Mistaken! I don't understand. How can I be mistaken about a fact that I have been contemplating ever since I knew you, indeed, ever since" —

He was arrested by Homoselle slowly and reprov-

ingly shaking her head. "Mr. Halsey, do not say that. If it were true, why have you told me so only to-day?"

He was so unprepared for this question, that for a moment he could not find words to reply; and Homoselle continued, —

"I am sure you have mistaken the nature of your feelings. You are my good friend, I know; and you have been misled into saying you love me, because — because" — her voice faltered, and she broke down. How could she finish? How speak of the undisguised weakness that had excited his pity? Her dignified little speech ended abruptly; and the last words, "I cried because I really had a dreadful headache that made me nervous," were almost inaudible.

Surprise, amusement, tenderness, mingled in Halsey's mind, and showed themselves in his face as he listened. He took both her hands in his strong, gentle grasp. "Listen, my beloved, while I tell you that you are wrong, altogether wrong. There is no mistake about the nature of my feelings: the only uncertainty I have is about yours. Did you consider me such a coxcomb as to suppose you loved me, merely because you showed a keen interest in my fate? Why, it would have been very strange and unnatural if you had not. Have we not been constant companions, friends, comrades even, for months? Even the darkies shed some tears when I got back safe and sound to Westover. I assure you, that when for some moments I thought it impossible to escape drowning, it added a pang to the bitterness of death to think how you and all my friends would grieve for what would appear to you as a tragic and untimely end."

"But," said Homoselle, trying, ever so gently, to free her hands, while a new light began to tremble over her face, like the soft dawn that precedes sunrise, — "but you never told me before — before" — She hesitated: the calm, self-contained Homoselle, who seemed cast in the heroic mould, fit daughter of the gods, trembled like any other girl under the glow of her lover's eyes.

"I know," he said, his voice falling to a tender monotone, while he bowed his head to look up into the eyes, veiled by downcast lashes; "but it was not because I did not love you before. If need be, I can tell you the very day and hour it began. But what I want to know now is, will *you* love *me*? And even this is not all I have to ask, or I should have spoken long ago: will you love me enough to wait until I can offer you a home? And oh! my love, this is the surest test of my devotion, that I dare to ask you to waste, for me, a part of your beautiful youth, that might so well be full of happiness with another more fortunate than myself." He pleaded earnestly, looking up into her face where the light was breaking. It was the old story, new every day, Pygmalion watching, with rapture, the marble quicken and glow while the statue was transformed into a trembling, blushing woman. But, even as he looked, a shadow fell on her countenance. Homoselle's life had been so busy and anxious, so prematurely given up to care and responsibility, that consideration for others had become the habit of her mind. She could not accept happiness without pausing to think how it would affect Halsey himself.

"What is it now, love?" he asked, feeling the imprisoned fingers beginning to flutter again, and seeing the grave, troubled look in her eyes, as she raised them for a moment, that she might see in his glance the love she felt was burning there.

"Do you think I would impose upon *your* youth the burden of winning a home for me, even if I loved you?"

"Even if you loved me! ah! that is the question. Only tell me if you love me, and I will take care of the rest. Work is to be my portion in life, at any rate: the only difference will be, that, with you to share it, life and its work will be dear to me, and, without you, a mere aimless existence. Homoselle, do you love me?"

"Would you mind telling me the day and hour you began to care for me?" she asked, evading the question, and playing with the ribbons of her hat.

"Not in the least; only I don't approve of your American fashion of answering a question by asking another. Mine by right of priority deserves to be answered first; but I will be magnanimous, and tell you it began about the time you called me a conceited Englishman."

"Oh, dear! Did I ever *call* you that?"

"You agree that you *thought* me one?"

"Well, yes, at first; but I don't remember telling any one so. How could you have heard it?"

"We are straying from the point."

"Which is?"

"Will you love me?"

"I can't say I *will*."

"Why not?"

"Because — I — *do*" — tilting her hat over her shy eyes by an impulsive movement of the ribbons.

"Bless you for that, my own straightforward darling!" cried Halsey, drawing her to him, and gently removing the hat from her rose-red face.

Halsey had been right in forecasting that the arbor would be a paradise. Nothing was wanting. The sweet old-fashioned garden spread out before them as fair as Eden of old; the skies were as cloudless, and the birds as blithe, as on the day when human love was first born into the world.

After a silence, which seemed to them the fulness of time to which all the currents of the universe had been tending from the beginning, Homoselle rose hastily at the sound of a rich, pleasant voice calling in the distance, "Miss Ulla! Miss Ulla! Whar you?"

"There is Chloe calling. I am wanted," she said, as Halsey drew her back to the seat beside him.

"Never mind for once: they must do without you to-day," he pleaded.

"Whatever happens, the world must have its dinner," she said, laughing and blushing, as, yielding to his entreaty, she resumed her seat. "But how did you come to fancy a girl like me, with such commonplace household cares? My days seem to be all Mondays, — wash-days or cooking-days, without a peg of romance to hang a sentiment upon."

"I did not fall in love with your days, sweet and dutiful as they seemed to me; but with *you*."

"That was very discriminating of you," she said with a happy sigh ; "for I fancy elegant leisure, graceful accomplishments, rare old lace, and the rest of it, set off a girl so."

"Yes, when she requires it ; but some girls are like lilies, and do not need to be set off."

"Don't believe it. You have not an idea how I should look in satin and rare old lace : I should astonish you."

"You shall try some day. But you know an Englishman's ideal of woman includes the domestic virtues quite as much as pretty clothes and what you are pleased to call graceful accomplishments."

"I hate domestic virtues," she said, withdrawing her hand. "I like the poetry of life."

"You forget that Milton, himself no inconsiderable poet, makes Eve a creature who fashions 'dulcet creams' for her Adam."

"Yes ; and don't you remember how Charlotte Brontë scathes him for his conception of the character? She says, that, instead of painting the mighty mother of the human race, he painted his cook."

"I do remember that she puts some such tall talking in Shirley's mouth, but it was all talk. Charlotte Brontë is too true an Englishwoman not to appreciate good housekeeping. I happen to know a friend of hers who says that she and her sisters are the daintiest little housekeepers in the kingdom. It is a mistake to suppose that genius or poetry excludes the domestic virtues. Haworth Parsonage is the very home of genius, and it is as comfortable and well kept as though its mistresses were dull, commonplace women."

"How eloquent you are ! You have not hesitated, or once said, ' Now, really,' or ' It's a fine day ! ' " mimicking his deep voice, and usual stammering speech.

"I am surprised you have not noticed that I am always rather eloquent when you will condescend to talk to me. But I am a little slow ; and I have not yet said what I wanted, about your graceful accomplishments."

"Now you are getting intensely interesting. Don't keep me in suspense : I am dying to know what are my graceful accomplishments ; I did not know you could discover one with a microscope."

"Remember, love, we do not study the heavenly bodies with a microscope."

"Oh ! I am telescopic, am I ? " cried Homoselle with a burst of laughter in which Halsey joined heartily.

Their nonsense seemed to give them as much enjoyment as philosophy could have done.

"Come, now, I am impatient to learn what my graceful accomplishments are. I am inclined to think you are trying to invent one or two, for fear I shall be mortified at possessing only the homespun qualities."

"Not at all. You walk" —

"I *walk* ! That is a good joke. Does not every woman who possesses the necessary requirements ? "

"Indeed, no. Most of them get over the ground, after a fashion, slouching, wriggling, waddling. But you walk, — walk like a Basque woman, like Diana, or, better still, like the lady whom Æneas met one day in the woods, and did not recognize until she moved.

Her walk was the crowning grace that proved her to be " —

"Whom?"

"The goddess of beauty."

"You take my breath away! Any thing else?"

"Yes: you ride, drive, and row, better than any girl I know."

"You have made a rhyme. I declare, you are getting poetical."

"Can I help it with such a theme?"

"They are calling me still," said Homoselle, rising again, and tying on her hat which had fallen off. "Heighho! It is time to be going: it is *always* time to be going when one *most* wishes to stay," she sighed with charming *naïveté*.

"Ah! Homoselle," said Halsey, echoing the deep-drawn, delicious sigh, "when you are my wife, you shall not be at the beck and call of cook, hostler, and scullion, as you are now."

"I dare say we sha'n't have such tiresome creatures in our *ménage*. What employment should we have for an hostler, for instance?"

"One can't tell. A sudden turn of fortune might make us proprietors of a pair of high-steppers."

"Possibly. I hope so. I suppose there is always fine stabling attached to castles in Spain."

"I think it very hard that I can never have an hour's uninterrupted talk with you. It has always been so," said Halsey, much aggrieved. "But it is particularly hard now, when I am going away so soon."

"Going away?" said Homoselle, her face suddenly becoming grave.

"Yes, darling, going away. You know, 'to make his crown a pound, her Jamie went to sea;' and the first thing *I* shall have to do is to return to England and go to work. I am in perfect health, my holiday is over, and I must begin where I left off."

"What is your work?"

"Law eked out with journalism, sketching, in fact any thing that comes to hand. I was not doing badly for a young fellow, when my mother's brother, who is the only near relative I have, sent me away from England for change of climate. It was not so much that there was any thing really the matter with me, as that I had a brother who died, at my age, of lung-trouble; and my uncle thought, if I tided over a few years in a mild climate, I should escape. I am perfectly well now."

It was difficult to associate ill health with Halsey's superb complexion and strong, well-made frame; but the feminine instinct of coddling was well developed in Homoselle.

"If you go back," she said, really alarmed, "you may get your brother's complaint. Can't you stay here, and eke out law with your pen and pencil?"

"Now you know you are talking nonsense. You are worse than my uncle," said Halsey, laughing at her serious face.

They wended their way slowly back to the house, their heads close together under Homoselle's parasol, talking very earnestly. They had entered upon a new world, the concerns of which stretched out illimitably before them, and seemed to afford subjects of discussion for a lifetime.

“What will your father say when I tell him of this little plan of ours?” said Halsey, as they paused for a moment at the garden-gate.

“You must let me tell papa first,” said Homoselle quickly, blushing to think that for the first time in her life she had taken an important step without pausing to consider how it would affect her father. “I must prepare the way: you know, men require a little management.”

“I perceive what I am to look forward to,” smiling at her frankness: “I shall be the most managed man in the world. But do you think your father will be very difficult?”

“I don’t know. Papa has always been very indulgent: but, you see, I am his only child, and he may find it inconvenient to give me up. No, don’t come any farther,” closing the low gate between them, and smiling at him over the bars with her shy, sweet eyes, that to-day seemed darker and deeper than ever. “I want to go home and think it all over by myself.”

Halsey folded his arms on the gate, and looked after her, as she went up the avenue leading to the house.

He loved to see her walk: her movements were so entirely worthy the dignity of a high-bred woman, the result not only of symmetry, but of character. For, though one is apt to forget it, it is nevertheless true, that gait and gesture are surer indications of character and breeding than mere facial expression. Her well-poised head, free, light step, and simple dress, following the lines of her beautiful form, satisfied the eye with a sense of perfect harmony.

Gazing after her with his heart unreservedly in his eyes, unconscious that he was himself being observed, his face told a story that he who ran might read.

Chloe, who had been roaming the grounds in search of her young mistress, was standing behind one of the jessamine-covered trellises, when Homoselle closed the gate between her lover and herself. Hearing the click of the latch, she peeped through the vines to see who was coming, and discovered Halsey, looking intently after the flutter of a light summer dress, pictured with leafy shadows from the over-arching trees. Glancing from one to the other, as a grub might watch the course of stars far above its reach, poor Chloe understood the pretty love-story at once.

"Dar now!" she sighed to herself. "Miss Ulla done cotched a beau."

When Homoselle reached the house, she met her father in the hall.

"Ellie, darling," he said, noticing the subdued excitement in her face and manner, "is any thing the matter?"

"Yes, papa," she answered gravely, "something *is* the matter. I am engaged to be married."

"The deuce you are!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A HARD BARGAIN.

IT cannot be denied that Mr. Despard was surprised and distressed at the nature of his daughter's confidences. He was wholly unprepared for a love-affair ; but, now that it had taken place, he was amazed at his folly in not foreseeing that it was the most likely of all things to occur. He would not hear of an engagement, however. The most he would consent to, and that reluctantly, was, if at the end of a year they were of the same mind, and Halsey was in a position to marry, he would not oppose their wishes. But he did not wish the matter spoken of. He had no idea of Homoselle appearing to the world trammelled by an indefinite engagement. Halsey was very frank about his own affairs. In addition to his profession he had an income of two hundred pounds, and modest expectations from a bachelor uncle, a healthy, middle-aged man, who had promised, should nothing unforeseen occur, to make him his heir.

Mr. Despard was entirely satisfied with Halsey himself, but his want of fortune was a serious drawback. The elder gentleman had been so hampered all his life by the want of money, he probably over-estimated its importance for his daughter. It was a great

disappointment that her affections were set upon a poor man. He had hoped her married life would make up in comfort and elegance for the privations and drudgery of her girlhood. And now, with a smile and a caress, she had dispelled all his illusions for her brilliant future, and made an entirely new disposition of things.

Homoselle's romance had reached the inevitable, prosaic stage of discussing ways and means. For society has made such developments and complications since the days of Adam and Eve, that many things beside the trousseau, not necessary then, have to be considered now.

It was decided that Halsey should return at once to England in order to resume his profession, and put his affairs in train with a view to taking a wife.

Meanwhile, another wooing was in progress at Dunmore, that did not fare so well as Halsey's.

Since Homoselle had obtained the money from her aunt for her father, all talk of selling Chloe had been abandoned ; but Michael had not ceased his attentions to the girl. He found her very coy and not at all propitious to his suit ; but of late she had somewhat changed her tactics. For, whereas she had once treated him with undisguised scorn, she now sometimes tolerated his presence, and even condescended, once in a while, to smile on him. She alone, of all who came in contact with him, was not afraid of him.

He was an immense creature, ferociously ugly : and, in addition to his naturally repulsive physiognomy, his eyes were always blood-shot, the result of heavy drink-

ing ; and this peculiarity gave him an exceedingly sinister expression. Besides all this, he was notoriously bad-tempered. He was the terror of the women and children in his neighborhood : even Skip, a remarkably fearless lad, quaked in Michael's presence. But Chloe laughed at his ugliness to his face ; eluded his fierce pursuit by a hundred mischievous wiles ; and, by her teasing, lashed his bad temper into fury. He was not daunted by these rebuffs, however, but continued to press his-suit in season and out of season.

One evening, not long after Halsey's declaration in the summer-house, Michael was paying a visit to the negro-quarters at Dunmore.

The day's work was over ; and the negroes were lounging before their doors, enjoying idleness in the open air, as only negroes can.

In front of Cinthy's cabin, which was situated at the end of a long row of similar dwellings, and by far the tidiest and most attractive of them all, sat Cinthy herself, smoking a pipe. In her yard, under the shade of fine old trees, Skip was playing marbles with Tommy and several other black boys.

Since Chloe had shed her childhood, and assumed long dresses and pensive womanly airs, he did not enjoy her society as much as in the old romping days. He sought his amusements now in dogs, horses, and boys. But Chloe still mounted guard, following him everywhere to keep him out of mischief. She was seated, on this occasion, in a swing that hung from the sturdy bough of an old oak, listening listlessly to the melancholy strains Michael was drawing from a violin.

For, ruffian though he was, Michael had a fine ear and taste for music. It was the only influence that ever soothed his savage breast. All negroes love music ; but with him it amounted to a passion, and it was remarkable with what precision and feeling he played, considering he was wholly untaught. He brought out all the old fiddle's pathetic jollity in his gay dance-pieces, and all the wailing sweetness of the sadder negro melodies.

The influence of his music was felt all along the line of loiterers at the cabin-doors. Hands, feet, and heads kept time. Cinthy nodded, Chloe swung gently to and fro : even the boys seemed to shoot their marbles to the tune of "Suwanee River."

Suddenly, with a flourish, Michael drew his bow sharply across the strings, and the performance was ended.

"Dar now, Chloe," he said, resuming a conversation that had been interrupted by the musical interlude. "You ain't tole me yit what made you run away de oder day when I met you in de woods wid dat white man."

"Cos you is too ugly a nigger to meet in de woods arter dark."

"Ugly or no, you better not let me see you wid him agin."

"What you gwine do to me ef you does?" she asked, with provoking contempt.

"Nothin' to *you*," he replied shortly.

She looked at him a moment, and seemed to quail a little at the menace in his frown.

Changing her defiant tone, she dropped her voice to the coaxing sweetness that was as great a gift as the beauty of her eyes or the pliant grace of her figure.

"La, Mike," she said, her words falling like honey on the negro's ear, while his whole countenance brightened and softened, "You ain't got no sense nohow. Don't you know what Mars' Halsey was a-talkin' to me 'bout?"

"'Bout yo' pretty flesh an' blood, I 'dar' say," said Michael, scowling again.

"Me pretty? go' long! I mout be pretty for a nigger, but I looks like dirty white 'longside of Mars' Halsey. He's 'fraid of niggers, he is. One day I hearn' him tell Miss Bertie, when he fust come here, he never like to see 'em touch any thing nice, he felt like dar color would come off; he, he!"

"I reckon he didn't see no color come off on his pocket-hankerchy you done up for him white as snow."

"Who said de hankerchy was his'n?" she asked quickly.

Michael chuckled: "I don't tell every thing I know."

"Two kin play at dat game; and I won't tell you nothin', nuther," said Chloe, averting her head with dignity.

"You mighty quick on de trigger," he answered apologetically, not wishing to scare her from her softer mood. "Ef you ask me pretty, like a lady, I'll tell you any thing."

Chloe condescended to smile. "I'se always a lady. I'se blooded, I is," she said, tossing her head.

Being a true Virginian, she thought a good deal

about blood : like master, like man. But Michael was a free negro, without the aristocratic instinct : moreover, he had been a jockey in his youth ; and blooded in his mind was connected with horse-flesh, of which every Virginian negro, in old times, was a judge.

Instinctively he glanced at Chloe's ankles, which were as slim as those of a thoroughbred filly.

"I see you is," he said with a loud guffaw : "I'd bet on them pasterns any day."

"Go 'long, Mike Dray. I ain't no horse. What I want to know is, who tole you de hankerchy b'long to Mars' Halsey?"

"I tole myself so."

"Den it's boun' to be a lie : you never tole de truth in yo' life."

"Truth dis time : seein' is believin' ; I seen you gin him de hankerchy."

"Did you foller me, you sneak?" she asked with a sudden burst of anger.

"I'se always a-follerin' you, Chloe ; an' I am a-keepin' an eye on *him*."

The girl moved uneasily. "La ! 'tain't wuth while watchin' him : I'se a-doin' that myself, comin' here arter my young mistiss."

"Yo' young mistiss? ahi ! is dat de way de cat jumps?"

"Sartain sho' : he was a-sendin' a message to Miss Ulla 'bout de fishin'-rods when you seen us in de woods."

Michael's face clouded again with doubt, as with a muttered oath he growled, "But he had his han' on

yo' shoulder when I seen him : was dat a message too?"

"La, Mike, he was jest a-pushin' me to hurry me up like : I was creepin' 'long slow as a snail."

"Cuss him ! I hate him for mo' things dan one. He's always a-pokin' his nose in every thing. I wish he had got drowned de oder night when de boat upset ; sarve him right for prowlin' round de ole church."

"De ole church !" echoed Chloe, darting a keen look at him. "Do de ole church b'long to you?"

"Dat it don't, dat it don't. It b'long to de dead," Michael hastened to reply. "But if dat white man go dar, he'll go anywhar. Some day he mout come pokin' in my watermillion-patch. But what I want to know is," he added, abruptly changing the subject, "when you gwine marry me?"

To his surprise, instead of overwhelming him with contempt as usual, she answered in her most caressing voice —

"Lem me see, Mike. Is you in a hurry?"

"Yes, my beauty, dat I is," said the negro, quivering with astonishment and delight : "to-day is de best day for me."

"La ! you *is* quick," she replied with a soft little laugh : "can't you wait none?"

"Not long," he said, slinging his violin, which he had put carefully away in a bag, across his shoulder, and coming nearer to her. Chloe, who always watched his movements narrowly, sprang with the agility of a cat to her feet in the swing ; with arms extended as she grasped the ropes, she looked down on her ad-

mirer with a mischievous smile. She wore the ordinary working dress of light-blue cotton, common on the plantation, but its scant draperies were as effective as a Parisian masterpiece in displaying the slender grace of her figure ; her mop of curls was tied up with one of Bertie's discarded red ribbons, but it was the color of all others to bring out the rich effects of her dark skin and hair and softly brilliant eyes.

By a gentle movement of her body she set the swing in motion ; and, swaying slowly back and forth, she looked like some bright tropical bird swinging on its perch.

"Can't you wait a yeah, Mike?"

"A yeah ! la, Chloe, I'd throw myself in de river befo' a yeah was out," he cried, passionately stretching out his arms to catch her as she swung towards him.

"Till Christmas, den?" she asked with a quick movement that sent the swing back, and brought it forward again with such force that Mike was obliged to jump out of the way to avoid being knocked down.

"Christmas is a long time," he growled, swallowing an oath at being obliged to cut this unexpected caper, and trying to catch the swing from the side.

"Don't do dat ; don't do dat : you'll pitch me out !" screamed Chloe, swinging higher and higher toward the tree-tops, and laughing at him from up among the leaves : "Christmas is de time for big weddin's : I won't marry nobody befo' den."

"Ef you promise me on yo' Bibl' oath to marry me Christmas, I'll try to wait patient till den, an' you shell have de biggest kind o' weddin' ; and, Chloe," he

added, lowering his voice, with a knowing wink, "by dat time I 'specs to have a big house for you, an' plenty of folks to wait on you."

"Niggers, you mean?" said Chloe, slackening her flight, and adopting his confidential tone.

Michael laughed.

"Whar you gwine to git a big house, and folks to wait on you, Mike Dray?" asked the girl imperatively.

"Never you mind: de wheel tuns roun' an' roun', an' de fly on de top gits to be de fly on de bottom arter a while," he chuckled.

"Mike," said Chloe softly, and with sudden determination, "ef you tell me whar yo' big house, an' folks to wait on you, gwine come from, I'll marry you Christmas."

"It's a bargain! it's a bargain!" cried Michael, clapping his hands, and shouting, as a true negro always does under excitement. "Jest wait a little while, an' I'll tell you all 'bout it. My ship's comin' home soon, an' we's goin' to have a good time, Chloe."

He made a dart at the swing again; but, as usual, she was too quick for him.

"La!" she exclaimed when she was at the highest point, and could overlook the road that was hid from him by trees and hedges. "Dar's Mr. Watson comin' down the road, gallin'up, gallin'up, on his brown mar'."

Now, Michael was an abomination in the sight of overseers, — the arch-instigator of discontent and rebellion. His very presence on a gentleman's planta-

tion was considered a trespass; and many an oath and cowhide lash had he received from irate overseers, for which, of course, there was no redress, and which could only be avoided by keeping out of the way. There was no love lost between Michael and this class of persons. They regarded him with suspicion and dislike, but he hated them with a deadly hate.

Hearing that Mr. Watson was coming down the road, — which, by the way, was one of Chloe's facile fictions, — he turned to depart with one of his growls that were as savage as those of a wild beast.

When he was fairly out of sight, Chloe fluttered down from her perch, and, seizing Skip, bore him off to the house to have his face and hands washed for the evening meal, which was being proclaimed by the cheerful tinkle of a bell.

Cinthy, sitting before her cabin-door, had seen the dumb show, without hearing the words of Chloe's conversation with Michael; and, as the latter walked discomfited away, she laughed to herself with the deep, husky, all-pervading negro mirth.

"How often has I tole dat nigger he'd have to git up mighty early in de mornin' to git ahead o' dat yaller imp!" she said, wiping her eyes with the back of her plump black hand.

Weakness, subjection, inferiority of position, tend, as is well known, to develop dissimulation. Chloe, who was a woman, a negress, and a slave, proved no exception to this rule. Her ingenuity in circumventing people sometimes amounted to genius.

CHAPTER XIV.

BROTHER GABRIEL.

HALSEY, whom we left hanging over the garden-gate, watching Homoselle as she wended her way to the house, the memorable day on which he declared his love, returned to Westover in such an exalted frame of mind, he seemed to tread on air, with his head above the clouds. But a sight of Major Carter's kindly satirical face brought him to earth again. As he met the quiet glance (in which always lurked a shrewd but indulgent smile that seemed to say, "I understand, but am not disposed to be hard on the follies of the world"), he remembered, with a shock, that it was only yesterday the major had predicted what took place to-day. But he did not speak of it until some days after, when they were alone in the evening, with their pipes, on the portico. Under cover of darkness and the influence of tobacco, it is easier to be confidential than in the garish light of day.

The major had not yet recovered from his recent illness; and, though he had resumed his ordinary habits, he was perceptibly weaker and more taciturn. Not that he seemed depressed; only quiet, and not disposed to exertion.

He sat in his easy-chair, pipe in mouth, his dogs at his feet, enjoying the mildness and beauty of the evening. The broad, bright face of the harvest-moon peeped through the vines, and the air thrilled with the mysterious music of throat and wing that makes a part of the charm of a summer night. Though the old soldier said nothing, he was quite ready to listen and be entertained by his guest.

Halsey hardly knew how to introduce the subject uppermost in his mind. It is difficult to make a confession of love abruptly: it seems a thing to be reached by gentle approaches. Even Halsey, less disposed than any man to beat about the bush, felt this. "I say, major," he began after much cogitation, and some British hemming and hawing, "I say, you are a wonderful man."

The major grunted sympathetically, without removing his pipe.

"A prophet too," continued Halsey with the rising inflection, but failing to elicit any expression of curiosity from his friend, who only grunted again. "Would you not like to know how?"

"At your convenience," murmured the other through his teeth, which still held on to his pipe.

This was not encouraging. Halsey saw that it was necessary to make a bold plunge.

"I have gone and done it," he said at length without more ado.

"Ah! I hope it was satisfactory."

"Yes, I think so; to both of us," — this very modestly.

"Then there were two of you?"

"Of course."

"And the other fellow was pleased, you say?"

"My dear major, what are you thinking of?"

"Of what you are telling me, though I don't know yet what that is."

"There was no other fellow in the case,"—impatiently.

"Then it was a woman!" exclaimed the major, removing his pipe now. "How was I to know? So you have been making love to Bertie then, as I said."

"To Bertie? No."

"To Homoselle? Well, I am surprised."

"Now, don't say that. You predicted it, you know. To be sure, I said it could not be. But you were wiser than I."

"Oh! I am not surprised at your love-making, only at your being so long about it. But I should have thought you would prefer Bertie, she is such a lively little creature."

"And Homoselle?"

"Yes, she is a fine young woman too, with nice feet and a beautiful smile; but she is almost too grandiose for me."

"A beautiful smile!" cried Halsey with enthusiasm. "You have hit it. A beautiful smile and a beautiful frown! The first ten minutes of our acquaintance, she smiled and frowned, and then smiled again; and my heart was caught inextricably between the two. You should see her eyes flash when she is angry!"

"Humph," murmured the major indulgently. "And is it a settled thing?"

“Settled as far as she and I are concerned. But her father will not consent to our engagement, and does not wish it known that we are attached to each other. Even your friend Bertie is ignorant of my hopes and plans. You are the only person, except Mr. Despard, to whom I shall speak of them until I am able to return from England to claim my wife ;” and Halsey sighed happily over the last word, glad to contemplate, even at a distance, the prospect of claiming his wife, and glad, too, to have made a clean breast of it to his friend.

“Return from England?” said the major irritably. “What on earth do you mean by that?”

The tone jarred on Halsey’s tender mood. He looked up in surprise : “Why, you know I must return at once to England.”

“I don’t know any such thing,” said the other, rapping the ashes sharply out of his pipe, and speaking with temper. “Going now, when I am ill and want you most ! Young people are so damned selfish !”

“My dear major !” said Halsey soothingly. “You are rather hard on a fellow. I thought you would be the last person to reproach me, considering your having anticipated what has happened.”

“Anticipated, yes. But I never imagined the thing would send you off at a tangent to England. I rather counted on its keeping you here a while, — at least until this illness of mine had ended — one way or another.”

“Oh !” said Halsey cheerfully, “is that it? I had no idea of going until you were convalescent. You know we have pulled through several attacks before.”

The major refilled his pipe. "I am a selfish old curmudgeon," he said, after it was lighted and drawing comfortably, "and I dare say I was deucedly cross just now. But I am not going to apologize, my dear fellow. Age and infirmity have their privileges, and one of them is to be cross without let or hinderance."

"The crosser you are, the better I like it. Every nurse knows that is a sign of getting well."

"Humph! I suppose you are in a great hurry for me to get well, so that you can be off as soon as possible."

"I want you to get well as fast as possible on your own account. But I confess I am anxious to begin gathering the straws for building a little nest for myself."

The major laughed grimly at this way of putting it. "A little nest for a huge creature like you! Why, where would you put those absurd legs of yours in a nest?"

"They could dangle outside, I suppose. I should not care so long as there was room for my mate to be comfortable," — looking up at the moon.

"Why, Halsey, you talk as though you were a turtle-dove. I shall expect to hear you cooing soon."

"I should not be surprised," — still gazing at the moon.

Another long pause; and then the major gave as the sum of his cogitations, "I wish you would build your nest under my eaves."

"That would be pleasant, but not practicable, major."

“Why not? I am longing to abdicate in favor of young blood. I should like, of all things, to see a new generation growing up around me.”

Halsey's heart swelled at the idea suggested by these words. He laughed gayly, but said he was afraid it could not be.

“You do not like America?” said the major quickly.

“Not like it? Don't I? Why, I have been as happy as possible here ; and I think the Americans are the kindest, most hospitable people in the world.”

“But it would not suit you to live here?”

“Not in the least.”

The major was inclined to be miffed at the promptness and decision of Halsey's reply ; but a moment's reflection showed him the injustice of being angry with a man for giving a direct answer to a direct question. When the irritation had passed, he said gravely, “Can you tell me your objections, Halsey? I have a special reason for wishing to know.”

“Let me see. In the first place, unless a man has the pioneer spirit, which I have not, it would be difficult to exchange an old country for a new one. It would be like exchanging an old, easy, well-fitting shoe, for a new and untried one.” The young fellow congratulated himself on the sagacity of his reply, which delicately conveyed his meaning, without a possibility of wounding the major's sensibilities.

But the major was not satisfied. “What are your other objections?” he persisted.

“You set me an ungracious task, my dear sir. I

have been content to like your country without criticising it. I have knocked about the world so much, that I have acquired the habit of taking things as I find them, — of enjoying what is enjoyable, and shutting my eyes to what is not. I think that is the best way for a traveller. But when a man means to make a *home* for himself, he must decide, not only what country suits him best, but the one to which he is best suited. Now, England is the best place for me, with the exception of its climate.”

“And that is a great deal ; for a man without health is no man at all,” said the major feelingly. “But you have not told me all your difficulties.”

Halsey beat the devil’s tattoo impatiently on the arms of his chair.

“Much as I like America, major, I think it would be impossible for an Englishman willingly to exchange English life for American.”

“Pshaw ! Our English forefathers were glad enough to do it.”

“I am not so sure they would have preferred to do it, if they could have had their own way in England. They were mostly poor men in search of fortune ; or adventurers ; or men with an idea, who wanted free scope for its development ; or men with a religious craze, who wanted to persecute and not to be persecuted ; or pioneers who wanted to found a new empire. These, you know, are straws that float on the surface, and are easily detached, in every country.”

“By Jove !” exclaimed the major, “they did not prove themselves straws in resisting the mother country.”

“That is perfectly true,” said Halsey, laughing good-naturedly. Seeing the major was getting excited, he did not wish to pursue the discussion in that direction. “But it is not with the old issues we have to do. What I meant to say was, that now, to-day, it would be difficult to find a man in our class of life, — unless, indeed, he were imbued with the pioneer spirit, — who would enjoy the transition from an old, well-established order of society, to a new and chaotic one. There is a sense of incompleteness and instability in the New World that jars on a denizen of the Old. But, not to beat about the bush, with me individually it would be impossible to live in a country where slavery exists.”

“Thunder and Mars ! I expected as much.”

“As a looker-on,” continued Halsey, hurrying to bring the disagreeable discussion to a close, “I can see and appreciate all your difficulties without meddling. Were I a citizen, with a citizen’s duties and privileges, I could not hold my peace ; and in that case how long do you think it would take for me to get a coat of tar and feathers?”

“Not twenty-four hours.”

“Exactly ; and yet you call this a free country.”

“Confound it, Halsey ! you do not understand. You do not see that this thing is an inheritance that we have to deal with as best we can ; that, like in your Irish affairs, all the tangled questions of property are involved in it ; that our entire system of labor is dependent upon it ; that it is a thing we cannot abolish suddenly without bringing destruction on all

parties ; a thing which must be worked out in the slow process of time ; and that the end is only delayed by outside interference. There !”

“I know all that. Since I have been here, I have seen how much is to be said on your side. But still it would not suit me. And now that I have made my confession, my dear sir, let us dismiss the subject.”

“Well, well,” said the major wearily, “I shall have to let the matter drop here. I am not physically able to argue the question. But I have not extorted your confession for nothing.”

“By the by,” said Halsey, not pausing to consider what this might mean, “it is a singular fact, that, in return for my sympathy with the negroes, I have managed to incur the enmity of at least one of the race.”

“What in the world makes you think so?”

“Last week when I went to Dobbin’s, I could have sworn that the negro they call Michael was dogging my steps ; and this week, in the loneliest part of that lonely road, I was shot at by some one concealed in the woods.”

“Good heavens ! But it must have been an accidental shot from some one hunting.”

“I should like to think so, but the circumstances of the case make it impossible. When I stopped involuntarily to look in the direction from which the shots came, I heard and saw, by the movement in the undergrowth, that my assailant was running away. I am glad he was a negro : a white man would have proved a better marksman. Both barrels were discharged, and both went wide of their aim ; that is,

sufficiently wide not to hit me, but near enough to make a fellow very uncomfortable."

"This is the strangest story," exclaimed the major. "A negro with arms ! I must look into the matter."

"I beg you will not until I am sure of my man. It would not do to move on suspicion."

"But, Halsey, can you imagine how you have made an enemy of the beast?"

It was too dark for the major to see the color that shot up into Halsey's cheek at this question.

"Yes, I think I can : a piece of negro stupidity," he answered shortly, without further explanation.

The major wondered, but did not press the matter. His mind still dwelt on the old theme.

"Halsey," he said presently, "tell me honestly, did you ever see a peasantry more well-to-do than our negroes?"

"Physically, no. Those I have seen are, for the most part, a healthy, jolly set. But intellectually and morally they have not a chance."

"Bless my life ! they have no intellect."

"How is it, then, that the house-servants are so much more intelligent and civilized than the field-hands?"

"They are imitative creatures, like monkeys."

"Humph !" grunted Halsey incredulously.

"Humph !" returned the other pugnaciously.

"There is one class especially to be pitied," began Halsey again. "I mean the mulattoes : they are neither one thing nor another, — not good enough for the whites, too good for the blacks."

"That is the fault of human nature, not slavery. Unfortunately, there is in every society a nameless, intermediate class of persons who are neither one thing nor another. The sins of the fathers, you know" —

"Yes, I know; but in a free country they are at least free, — free to work out a name and position for themselves. But here their condition is hopeless. For instance, at the Despards' there is a beautiful, intelligent girl, who with education might become almost any thing. As it is, she can never rise above the miserable condition of a slave."

"Pshaw! Are there no beautiful, rosy-cheeked English girls, who can never rise above the miserable condition of an overworked factory-girl? But we are arguing in a circle. My pipe is out, and I am going to bed. I am glad, however, to know your views on this subject. It is important to me and to you that I should."

The major had occasion, not long after, to remember this conversation.

Halsey went to sleep wondering how it was possible that his views on the subject of slavery could be of importance to anybody but himself.

He was roused some hours later by the major, who occupied the room adjoining his. The old gentleman had wakened with an unaccountable sense of weakness and exhaustion, and felt as if a julep would do him good. Would Halsey be so kind as to rouse the servants, and have one made?

"No," said Halsey, getting quickly into his dressing-suit, "I will do better: I will make one myself. I

know all about it now ; and I know where the mint grows, and where the liquor-case and the ice are. In ten minutes you shall have an 'eye-opener.' ”

When Halsey got down-stairs, he found the house-door open ; which did not surprise him, as it was oftener the case than not. He had long ago become accustomed to the careless security in which Southern planters slept, — as independent of bolts and bars as soldiers on the tented field.

It was a splendid night. The moon at her meridian shone almost as bright as day. The homely old-fashioned garden, with its white walks and prim flower-beds, was transformed into a scene of enchantment. Myriads of stars sparkled in the heavens above ; myriads of dewdrops gemmed the earth beneath. A 'cool fragrance hung in the air, — the breath of trees and plants giving their sweetest odors to the night. Halsey saw and felt it all, as he hurried through the flower-garden to the kitchen-garden beyond. He had no difficulty in finding the mint-bed, the night was so bright ; and moreover he was led by the nose, for the smell of the mint made itself clearly distinguishable among the sweet herbal odors of the truck-patch. As he stooped to gather some sprigs from the luxuriant bed that lay in the shelter of the garden fence, he heard a low voice quite near him, say, “Is you gwine to the buryin' groun'?” He looked about him in astonishment ; but, before he could speak, an answer came in an equally subdued tone : “Yes, I'se on my way dar now ;” and Halsey, who had been startled at first, understood that just on the other side of the fence two

negroes were conversing as they stole softly along in the shadow.

"Ain't you afeerd?" asked the first voice. "'Sposin' de overseer was to ketch us."

"De overseer done gone to King William to buy a par o' horses, and won't be back till tomorrer. You'd better come 'long wid me. Mike Dray gwine to speak, and Mr. Johnson, and Brudder Gabriel."

"I don't want to miss Brudder Gabriel."

Halsey heard no more: he was in a hurry to get back to concoct the major's julep. But the words had excited his curiosity; and when he had made what he considered a masterpiece in the way of an American mixed drink, and seen the major's eyes first twinkle over it and then close in slumber under its benign influence, he thought he would go and hear Brother Gabriel too.

He felt some interest in this man, of whom he had often heard but had never seen,—a man spoken of by the whites as a religious fanatic and a dangerous fellow; by the negroes, as a saint and a prophet. Had he been the angel Gabriel, he could not have been held in more esteem among his own people. Indeed, it was supposed they really believed that there was a mysterious connection between the negro Gabriel and his angelic namesake. Brother Gabriel was the burden of all their hymns, the theme of all their sermons and pious ejaculations.

Halsey recognized the necessity of being very cautious in his movements. A white man's presence at this secret meeting in the small hours of the night

would either break up the conclave, or change its character. Fortunately his jacket and trousers were of just that dusky gray which is almost invisible at night; and he thought, by stealing noiselessly along in the shadow of the worm fences, he should be able to reach the cemetery unnoticed.

He had no intention of becoming a spy on their proceedings; but as a student of human nature he felt a desire to see and hear the man who had made himself a leader of his people, and whose eloquence had power to awaken in their sluggish natures the wildest enthusiasm.

A strange, weird sight met the young Englishman's eyes, when, by stealthy approaches, he had reached the place of meeting, and secured a position where he could see and hear without being seen.

The negro burial-ground was an acre or two of land enclosed in a belt of pines that cast black shadows over the lowly graves of generations of slaves. Crowded in among the hillocks where their forefathers found rest, were hundreds of the slaves of to-day; and the moon shining serenely down threw broad patches of light, here and there, on their dark, upturned faces. They were listening with rapt attention to a white man whom Halsey recognized as the Johnson whom the major had forbidden to set foot on his plantation. In a thin, nasal voice he was telling them how, when a child in his far-off Northern home, he had read and wept over their wrongs and sufferings; how, even at that early age, he had resolved to spend his life in trying to serve them; how he had sought with his pen

and his means to improve their condition ; how, being poor and a cripple, he was not able to do much ; but, to advance their interests one jot, he would gladly lay down his life, "and more than this can no man do." He did not speak long ; and what he had to say, he said rapidly. Time was short, and there was much to be done. But he spoke with feeling ; and when he said, "More than this can no man do," his voice broke with emotion.

A low, crooning murmur broke from the crowd that did not dare to raise its voice in applause. But the very suppression of excitement made it more intense. A magnetic current seemed to pass through the multitude, that shivered and trembled like the leaves of the forest before a mighty rushing wind. It reached even Halsey, hiding outside of the dense throng in a clump of bushy pines.

Michael spoke next ; and his brutal nature showed itself in exultation over the triumph of revenge which he hoped would shortly crown the black man's efforts. Like every people who undertake warfare, there was "the beauty and booty" element among these negroes ; and to this, Michael appealed. To their credit be it said, that, though here and there his exultation found echo in the crowd, he utterly failed to move them as one man, in the way Johnson had done.

But the crowning moment was when Gabriel ascended a block that served as a rude monument to one of the graves. The moonlight falling on him seemed to etherealize his face and figure, which were not without a certain dignity of their own. He was tall, spare,

broad-shouldered, long-limbed, and his head and face outlined against the sky, were massive and well-shaped. He spoke rapidly and vehemently, with little or no gesture except a nervous clutching of the hands as they hung by his side. His language was remarkably terse for a negro, and every point told like an electric shock. His voice was of a wonderfully pathetic quality; and the first words uttered from such a man to such a people, — “Freedom! I am here, my brothers, to talk to you of freedom!” — fell like a spark of fire in their midst. In a moment the whole assembly caught the inspiration; and there burst like a flame from every heart and tongue such a cry of “Freedom!” as might have waked the dead at their feet. Lucky was it that no patrol was scouring the country that night. Gabriel himself seemed startled by the outburst. He raised his hand quickly with a gesture of command, and immediately the tumult was stilled. When silence was restored, he took up his theme again: “Freedom, my brothers, is a word we mus’ keep burnin’ like a steady light in our hearts, but de time ain’t come yit to proclaim it aloud to de worl’. Dar is danger in de very ar! But de day is comin’, do’, is almos’ at han’, when every man among you will walk a free man, free as de birds of heaven, free as de souls of our dead now in de presence of de good Marster. Man can’t buy and sell souls, and de Lord dat makes de sperrit free can free de body also. But as you mus’ wuk out yo’ own salvation, so you mus’ wuk out yo’ liberty too. De Lord always stan’s ready wid a helpin’ han’. In de ole times he led his people out o’ de house o’

bondage, an' he will do it agin. But his people was a gainsayin' an' rebellious people, an' had to sarve a long time befo' dey was ripe for freedom; an' so it will be wid you ef you don't do de thing dat is right. De time of slavery is a time of schoolin'. De Lord means us to larn now what we couldn't never have known if we was free to-day in Africa as our fo'-fathers was. We has learned much, my brothers; but we is very ign'ant still, so ign'ant dat we don't know yit all dat liberty means. We see through a glass darkly. But we know it don't mean laziness nor drinkin' an' stealin', nor freedom from de sorrow dat comes to every man born into de worl'. You mus' do right, you mus' be brave an' perseverin'; an' when de day of freedom comes, you'll know how to use de liberty de Lord is gwine to help you to win. For de Lord is on our side. He is always on de side of de po', de miserable, an' de oppressed."

As in the case of every orator, it was not so much in what Gabriel said, as in his way of saying it, that the secret of his power lay. For twenty minutes or more he held his audience spell-bound: sobs and groans broke from the crowd, and so deeply was Halsey moved that it was with difficulty he repressed his own sobs. In after-life he was often heard to declare that no eloquence had ever touched him like Brother Gabriel's. The eloquence of the situation may have had much to do with the effect of the address. A slave speaking to slaves of freedom, the joys of which they had never tasted except in hope, as the soul with sin and sorrow laden tastes of the joys of heaven, was a sermon in itself.

The homeliness of the negro dialect took nothing from the effect of Gabriel's words. To Halsey's mind it made them all the more pathetic ; and the young man was surprised at the elevation of thought discernible in every thing the untutored negro said. He spoke like a warrior of the daring and self-restraint needed to achieve an enslaved people's freedom, and like a woman in his exhortation to temper firmness with mercy. Halsey wondered where he got his ideas, for they savored of inspiration. He seemed to be one of the few Heaven-taught leaders of men who have figured in the world's history.

Before the proceedings of the meeting were over, Halsey had heard enough to make him a wiser and a graver man.

"Heaven help me !" he thought, as he stole away unperceived before the crowd dispersed : "I am between the upper and the nether millstone. If I speak, I shall be a traitor to these poor creatures ; if I hold my peace, I shall be worse than a traitor to the major."

He returned to the house with a heavier heart than when he came out, and his spirit oppressed with a painful sense of responsibility.

CHAPTER XV.

SUNDAY MORNING.

TWO carriages were drawn up in front of the Dunmore house on Sunday morning, and several saddle-horses were tied to the rack at the gate. The breakfast-table was spread in the dining-room. Dick, the head waiter, stood behind his master's chair; Tommy, in his Sunday suit, sleepily waved his peacock-feathers; the family were breakfasting leisurely by detachments, and a genial air of rest and holiday shone everywhere.

Mr. Despard and Skip were still at table; Homoselle had risen, and was standing, habited in a dark-green riding-dress, at the window, admiring a pair of beautiful horses, attached to a stylish equipage and being held by a groom in livery. Bertie had not yet come down.

"The plot thickens," said Homoselle, as Phil Roy, the owner of the carriage and pair, ran up the front steps. "We shall have a grand cavalcade going to church this morning. Besides our carriage, there are the horses for papa, Skip, and myself, Mr. Halsey is coming presently, and now here is Phil in all his magnificence."

"He!" laughed Skip, "we'll look just like the circus!"

"And who'll be the monkey?" asked uncle Despard, who had recovered his cheerfulness since the payment of his note, and the ingathering of an unusually good wheat-crop.

"My! Phil," exclaimed Homoselle to her cousin, who had entered and was exchanging pleasant morning salutations with her father and Skip: "what a stylish turnout, and *such* horses! I never saw any thing more perfect than all the appointments. Such beautiful harness and every thing! We don't often do things like that here."

"Rope harness does just as good," mumbled Skip, his mouth full of buttered toast, disposed to resent any reflections on the customs of Virginia.

"I am glad you like my horses," said Phil, not noticing the boy, "for I came to drive you to church. So you must change your riding-dress at once, or we shall be late."

"But, Phil" —

"Oh! I will give you fifteen minutes."

"But you see I am going to ride."

"Can't you drive this once?" said Phil, who was not accustomed to having himself or his horses slighted. "I promise you Jack and Gill shall go like the wind."

"I should like that, of all things, but I have already promised Mr. Halsey to ride with him."

"Ah! Mr. Halsey?" said Phil, arching his eyebrows with a peculiar smile. "I passed him just now as I drove through the wood. He seems to be a fortunate fellow."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Homoselle quickly, and with more eagerness than she intended.

"Mean by saying he is a fortunate fellow to be going with you to church! My dear cousin, what could I mean but a compliment to yourself?"

"Then I beg your pardon. I fancied I detected an *arrière pensée* in your smile that looked a little like a sneer."

Roy laughed. "What an inquisitor you would make! To think of analyzing a fellow's smile like that! But you were quite right to shut down on me if you thought I sneered. Nothing is so ill-bred."

"Now, didn't you give a queer little smile?"

"To be quite frank, I suppose I did look disagreeable, but chiefly because I was disappointed at not having you to drive with me. It is the perversity of fate that I should ask you when you have another engagement."

"No, it is the perversity of man that you have never asked me until now."

"Every thing has a beginning," said Roy with slightly heightened color.

Homoselle, who was still looking at the horses, did not perceive the change in his manner. She was in fine spirits, and went on talking more volubly than her wont, out of pure light-heartedness: "Yes, I have been grown and in society two years, and you have never asked me to drive behind your horses, that are the envy of the neighborhood, until to-day when I have another engagement. All my opportunities come at once. I must say I should prefer their being spread out thin. It is quite a serious matter to lose a drive in such an equipage and with such horses."

Phil bit his lip. "Equipage and horses are much obliged, and for the future are entirely at your service," he said gravely and with a bow so much more ceremonious than the occasion required, Homoselle saw that for some inexplicable reason he was hurt.

"Now, don't look insulted," she said, smiling: "you know I can enjoy your society without the horses. Are you not coming to dine with us after church?"

"Not to-day, thank you. By the by, I thought your English friend made it a point of etiquette to walk to church on Sunday."

"So he does greatly prefer it. He says it is the habit of English country-folk, and he likes his beast to kick up his heels in the pasture on Sunday."

"A highly humane sentiment. Why does he not carry out his principles on this occasion?"

"That is my fault, I am afraid. He asked me to walk with him; but I told him, crossing a nice English field or two, in a cool, damp climate, was very different from trudging six miles under our September sun. He has not had a touch of James-River chills yet. So, as I would not walk with him, he was obliged for this once to ride with me," said Homoselle, looking at her watch, and casting a furtive glance down the road.

"Oh! he will be here presently. He was not far when I met him; though, to be sure, he seemed thoroughly absorbed in conversation."

Homoselle turned, and looked at her cousin; but this time she could not detect whether he smiled or not.

"Homo," cried Skip from the table, breaking the

pause that followed, "I wish you would ask Dick not *always* to give me the leg of the chicken. He gives me the worst things every day."

"Who ought to have the worst things, young man, — I, or probably papa?"

"And just look at this napkin!" continued Skip, not noticing the flimsy satire, but holding up a well-worn, oft-darned napkin, while he thrust his finger through a hole where an embroidered crest once figured. "My pa says rags is the family coat-of-arms."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Despard. "Pretty good, pretty good, Skip: your pa is right. Nothing could be more appropriate for a family so out at the elbows. But how ought the device to be represented? — you are up in heraldry, Ellie, — by a ragged-robin, or an old-clo'-man?"

"Papa, you ought not to encourage Skip's pertness. He has shocking manners; undertakes to be chief speaker on all occasions, and gives his father as an authority for his most impudent speeches."

"So much for having a clever papa," laughed Mr. Despard. "Skip won't let his father's witticisms die for want of airing."

"He may get his wit, as you call it," said Homoselle severely, "from his father; but his grammar seems to come from Chloe and Tommy."

"Wit is the chief thing, Ellie: if you have that, you can learn grammar; but all the grammar in the world won't make 'Jack' a bright boy."

Skip, backed up by his uncle, was preparing to put in his tongue again, when his aunt Bertie sailed into

the room. Like many small women, she thought to make up for want of height by the length of her dresses; so, when she entered, laboriously dragging a train, the most of her seemed to be wriggling, serpentine fashion, along the floor. She often swept away cushions and other small articles, besides getting entangled in chairs and caught in doors; but she was willing to put up with such inconveniences for the sake of additional grace and dignity.

Phil greeted her at once with an invitation to drive with him to church, which she graciously acceded to, and then proceeded leisurely to eat her breakfast.

No room for small boys' conversation now. Bertie chattered continuously, but cheerfully, about the heat that was killing her, the breakfast that was too substantial for her languid appetite, the prospect of a dull sermon, and the stupidity of a world in which she condescended to live. "Yes, Phil," she rattled on, "you certainly have given a fillip, — excuse the pun: they say it is impolite to pun on a person's name, but it slipped out, — a fillip to my intention of going to church. To think of driving six miles in such weather! My heart failed me until I saw Jack and Gill's slim, thoroughbred legs glancing down the avenue. I knew you had come to take me to my Sunday devotions."

Here Skip made a grimace, and was about to enlighten his aunt as to Phil's original intention, but that gentleman checked him with a glare. "But I assure you," continued Miss Despard, "the warmth of my prayers is in inverse proportion to the warmth of the sun" —

"Stop growling about the weather, Bertie. No better weather anywhere in the world," interrupted Mr. Despard cheerfully.

"Then the sermon we are going to have. If Mr. Berkeley would *only* let us off with the service!"

"Now, don't say any thing against Mr. Berkeley," said Phil. "I don't often affect parsons; but I have a warm place in my heart for this one, and the young fellow has a history in his face."

"Yes," said Bertie, "but a history you will never learn from his lips. I never saw such a man. He never alludes in the most distant manner to himself or his belongings. He is as impersonal as the pronoun *It*. But he *has* an interesting face; and that is something in this humdrum world, where most people are not interesting at all."

"It is very hard on you, Bertie, to have to put up with such a world," said Mr. Despard, rising, and lighting his cigar.

"It is very hard on me to be expected to eat beef-steak or chicken five days in the week. Homoselle never seems to consider my delicate appetite, which really requires pampering to be of any use at all."

In truth, though a valiant talker, Bertie was not much of an eater. Far more came out of her mouth than went in, and her breakfast did not consume much time. It was not long before she was ready to tuck herself and train in Phil's luxurious carriage, and be bowled over the level roads that make a pleasant feature in the low river-lands of Prince George County.

At starting Skip, who was in a frenzy of excitement

about riding a horse "all by himself," — a treat that rarely came to him except on Sunday, — begged to be allowed to go with Dick and Cinthy to the negro-church, which was of the Baptist persuasion. He had no especial preference for that form of religion ; but the church was two miles farther from Dunmore than the Episcopal church where the family worshipped, and two miles additional riding, going and returning, was an immense consideration to a boy whose ideal of happiness was to have his legs astride a real live horse.

"O uncle ! O Homo ! let me go with Dick and Cinthy," pleaded the little fellow, running frantically from one to the other.

"But, Skip," said Homoselle, "Dick and Cinthy are Baptists : you are not a Baptist ; you are a little Churchman."

"I ain't no Churchman : I won't be a Churchman," shouted the boy, with crimson face, and tears in his eyes : "my pa says we ain't nothin' but church *mice*."

"Ha, ha !" laughed uncle Despard again. "Ellie, we must let him go this once. And be sure, you young rascal, to remember all the preacher tells you, as well as what that father of yours says."

At last the whole party, except Homoselle, rode away, leaving her at the window watching for Halsey, and wondering what could have got into Phil to make him so touchy. "A highly humane sentiment ! Why does he not carry out his principles on this occasion ?" she said to herself, mimicking his grand air.

But at length Halsey made his appearance, and put

an end to her soliloquy. She watched him dismount from his horse, and walk slowly up to the house, his head bent in thought, and twirling absently between his finger and thumb a spray of yellow jessamine. She smiled when she saw this, for he had often called it her flower. On one occasion he had helped her to gather great baskets of the fallen blossoms, which she used to scatter through her linen-presses ; and he had come to associate the fresh fragrance and beautiful bloom of this truly Southern flower with herself.

“You are late,” she said with a questioning look, as he entered the room, still deep in thought and very grave.

“Late for the gossip in the churchyard before service, perhaps,” his face brightening in answer to her smile ; “but not too late for the service itself, I think. How admirably your habit becomes you, Homoselle ! I tell you that with every change of dress ; but I really think your riding-habit is the best of all, — so simple, and close-fitting ; the very thing for your style.”

“Every day I get a little accession of vanity,” said Homoselle, tying on her double veil, and concealing the glow of pleasure called up by her lover’s admiration. “But what makes you late ?” she asked with a touch of the curiosity awakened by Phil.

His countenance clouded again. “I was detained by some very vexatious business.”

“For several days I have thought you a wee bit grave,” she said tenderly. “Can’t you tell me what it is all about ?”

“Oh ! several things. The major’s continued illness, and the uncertainty of my movements.”

“But there is something else?”

“Yes, something else which I cannot tell you now. So you must bear with me a little while if I seem grave and anxious. But you must not betray me, love. It is important that you should help me to appear as if nothing were the matter. I can trust you for this?” His manner was serious almost to solemnity.

“My hand on it,” she said, with a warm, trusty clasp.

They reached the church in better time than they anticipated. The gossip was still going on in the churchyard. Mr. Berkeley had just arrived, and had not yet put on his surplice, the signal for the congregation to take their places. Most of the elder members had entered the church; but the lambs of the flock were disporting themselves outside, under the trees. Carriage-loads of fresh country-girls in their Sunday finery, somewhat blown and tumbled by a drive in close quarters; sunbrowned young men in broad-brimmed hats and rustic attire, with horses like their masters in that their birth and breeding were better than their coats,—these, with the children of the congregation, made a large and picturesque assembly.

One peculiarity of the company was that they were all kinsfolk.

A few families of good English lineage, and belonging to the English Church, had been the first settlers of this part of the State; and they had married and intermarried with each other until everybody was cousin to everybody else. And there were only half a

dozen family names among them. A visitor to the neighborhood once said that every man she met was either a Nelson or a Page, except one, and he was Nelson Page.

This universal cousinship had a peculiar effect on society. For while the girls claimed affectionate relationship with each other, and were on the most intimate social footing, they treated the men with the formal courtesy due to strangers. The reason of this was, these male cousins were the only available matches in the county, it being impossible to marry out of their own circle. By some arrangement understood only among themselves, the young ladies regarded each other as cousins, but gentlemen of exactly the same degree of relationship were no kin at all. Kate was dear cousin, embraced with effusion; but Tom, Kate's brother, was Mr. Page, with a ceremonious inclination of the head.

Every society has little subterfuges peculiar to itself, and this is comparatively an innocent one as far as intention goes; but it is not so certain that no harm has resulted from this continued intermarrying.

Caste has its disadvantages, when, like the Royal Family of England, it has but a limited circle from which to choose its mates.

When Halsey and Homoselle, a goodly pair, well mounted, rode into the churchyard, which was extensive enough to accommodate not only the congregation, but all its various means of conveyance, they were received on all sides with admiring smiles and cordial greetings. They might be a little stiff in manner, and

slow in conversation ; but they rode well, an accomplishment that never fails to elicit due admiration in Virginia.

They tarried only long enough for Halsey to secure the horses, and went immediately into the church. On their way they met Bertie and Phil ; and as Homoselle, her riding-skirt thrown jauntily over one arm, walked with a little bashful pride by the side of her handsome lover, she was struck by the scarcely perceptible nod with which Phil returned his cordial salutation.

She was indignant at the rudeness, and glanced into Halsey's face to see if he had noticed it. But his placid countenance, as he drew his prayer-book from his bosom, told her nothing. The Englishman's prayer-book was the subject of a good deal of merriment among the young men, who could understand carrying a pistol — but a prayer-book ! With them it would have seemed goody and effeminate to the last degree ; but they had come to excuse it in Halsey. His prayer-book seemed as much a part of himself as his big cane, his eye-glasses, or even his English whiskers, and was on duty every time he appeared at church. There was certainly nothing of the milksop about him ; and his big bass voice, that seemed to bear up the feeble choir's whole volume of chant and anthem, was only another evidence of his splendid masculine physique. "By Jove !" exclaimed one of the Pages, the first time he heard the low-rolling thunder of Halsey's voice chanting the *Te Deum*, "if a man *does* go in for that kind of thing, let him do it

like that. When he chanted, 'Govern them, and lift them up forever,' I felt lifted out of my boots."

"Pity you were not lifted a little higher," said Mr. Berkeley, the parson with the history in his face, whose words were as keen as his smile was tender: "let us hope the next time you will be." To which Page had the grace to say "Amen."

Halsey^a did not sit with Homoselle in the family pew, but retired to some out-of-the-way corner where she saw no more of him until she was ready to mount her horse. She did not ask him the reason of this; for on a former occasion she had elicited the halting response, "Now, really! you see, I am a stupid fellow. I can't do two things at once. I go to church for one thing, and when I sit near you I am apt to think of another."

When service and sermon were over, Homoselle was among the first to get out of church. She hurried a little, in order to avoid meeting Phil, who had annoyed her by his mysterious smiles and supercilious greeting of Halsey.

She paused a moment at the gate, round which were gathered a group of negroes. A few of them preferred the white people's religion, among them some catechumens of Homoselle's, whom she was bringing up stanch church-folk. Chloe was one of these, and Homoselle stopped to scold her for being late at service. Chloe stole a sidelong glance at Halsey, blushed, courtesied, and lowered her eyelashes, which, partaking of the nature of her hair, curled up at the ends, a peculiarity which gave a singularly soft

effect to her eyes. She promised, "nebber to do so no mo'."

Nobody ever looked more penitent than Chloe when reprimanded ; and, though Homoselle knew from experience that the penitence was of the most short-lived character, it was impossible not to pronounce absolution to so much humility.

"I am provoked with Phil for looking so stiff and conceited," said Homoselle, when she and Halsey were riding home by the longest and shadiest road, which they had to themselves.

The rest of the congregation contrived to take in their route the little hamlet that clustered round the post-office, to inquire for letters or learn the news.

"I can't think what is the matter with him."

"I think you are the matter," said Halsey, smiling.

"I !" she exclaimed, checking her horse, and stopping a moment in the road, the better to take in the idea. "Absurd ! Phil Roy does not care for me in the least. I have known him all my life, and until the last few weeks he has never taken the smallest notice of me."

"Yes ; and in the last few weeks he has been persistently scowling at me ; at first, I supposed, on national grounds, since he is always making comparisons unfavorable to England. But I have recently come to the conclusion that it is all on your account. As long as your father withholds his consent to our engagement, I have no right to let Roy know his place," said Halsey, his smooth, good-tempered countenance ruffled by an expression of extreme discontent.

"I shall take care of that," said Homoselle : " besides, you are mistaken about his caring for me."

Halsey's brow cleared. "I ought to be magnanimous," he said : "with England for a country, and you for a wife, I can overlook trifling annoyances. Let us think of something better than Mr. Phil Roy's impertinences. That sky, for instance," looking up at the radiant blue sky, shining down through the foliage. "Surely there are no fairer skies in the world than you have here ;"

"Not even in Italy?"

"Not even in Italy ; and surely, too, everybody must think that deep sapphire blue the most beautiful of all colors. Don't you?" he asked, glancing from the sky into the serene depths of her blue eyes that shone through a narrow opening in her veils, that reminded one of the headgear worn by Oriental women, with a slit for the eyes.

"Beautiful ! but not the most beautiful of all," she said : "I confess to a passion for pink."

"Roses, perhaps?"

"Not exactly. But I could never make you understand how some shades of pink affect me. You would laugh at me for an enthusiast."

"Who, I? On the contrary, nobody is more sensitive to color. Tell me about your pink."

"It goes very far back, and is a memory as well as a sentiment," she said earnestly, yet shyly, as if the aroma of her thought would exhale in giving it utterance. "You know country children are very dependent on the seasons for their enjoyment ; and when I was a

little girl I hated winter. Then some mild day, after a long time of frost and cold, all of a sudden I would see a beautiful pink glory in the air, that made me so happy, I can't tell you. It was the peach-trees blossoming. There is no color like it ; and to-day a peach-tree, or an orchard of peach-trees, in bloom is the most beautiful sight in the world to me, and stirs every sense of enjoyment. I am sure my feeling is a tiny note in the grand chorus of Nature's rejoicing on the return of spring. You may laugh ; but my heart sings the same tune as the rippling of the melting waters, the twitter of birds, and the shooting of buds."

Halsey did not laugh : his eyes shone with sympathy as Homoselle tried to express that buoyant sense of life that is born anew every year at nature's sweet Easter-tide.

"What an earnest creature you are !" he said lovingly ; "and how you make me forget, when I am with you, that nature has its dark side !"

"Yes, let us forget it, dear, while we can. This is our spring-time ; that is, it is mine, and my life is full of bloom."

The expression of her eyes made this tender flattery the sweetest and most delicate love-making.

Halsey felt as if he were quaffing the daintiest cup of happiness ever offered to mortal lips ; but all the while his heart ached with a sense of impending evil that he could not for a moment forget.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MILLER'S BOY OF HORN'S NECK.

HALSEY left Homoselle before the rest of the family got back from church.

There are moods upon which the most friendly intercourse jars uncomfortably ; and he was in just the frame of mind that cannot enter lightly into the passing interests of the moment. The others returned full of an incident that had taken place in the village.

Michael had been arrested with a gun in his hands, it being unlawful for a negro to carry arms ; and quite a hubbub of excitement was going on at the post-office, where all the loungers of the neighborhood — and they were not a few — congregated on Sundays.

A very small thing will create a stir in the monotony of village-life ; and there was as much talk about Michael and his gun, as if there had been an earthquake or some other unexpected convulsion of nature. But vigor of speech does not always insure vigor of action, and the affair ended in talk.

Michael represented that the weapon had been borrowed from a white man, for the purpose of shooting a dangerous dog that had gone mad and was creating a panic among his neighbors. Upon being questioned as to who the white man was, he said it was Mr. John-

son, the tutor at Mr. Trenholm's. Mr. Johnson, being examined in turn, appeared surprised and confused, but finally confessed that he had lent the gun to Michael, as he had said, for the purpose of killing a dog. The gun was then restored to Johnson, who did not seem to know what to do with it; and Michael was dismissed with a warning. But there were men who shook their heads over the evident understanding between Michael and the tutor, both of whom were suspected of disloyalty to the existing order of things.

Skip was in high glee over Michael's arrest. Perched aloft, like a mosquito on horseback, he had seen the gigantic negro, the one person of whom he stood in mortal terror, handcuffed, and pleading in his dogged, sullen way, to be let off.

"Ahi!" laughed the child, "I saw that big, red-eyed nigger chained at the post-office! I am so glad they took his gun away from him! he'd just as soon kill anybody as look at 'em. I saw him beat a dog to death in the road one day; and I wanted to be a man to kill him, 'cos a dog is a heap sight nicer than he is."

Halsey heard none of all this; and in the afternoon when he went, as usual on Sunday, to see Dobbin, a fellow-countryman whom he had discovered and befriended in his rambles, he was so absorbed in the train of thought which had recently taken possession of him, that, curiously enough, he forgot his adventures of the two preceding Sundays.

It was only when he turned into a lonely road through the woods, that he remembered his suspicions with regard to Michael's animosity. He glanced un-

easily up and down the gloomy, unfrequented road, made gloomier still by the lengthening shadows of evening. But his uncomfortable sensations were quickly dispelled by a loud, clear whistle, as merry as the note of a blackbird. The cheerful human sound made him smile at his apprehensions.

Directly in his path, about twenty feet ahead, a mulatto boy sat on a stump by the wayside, whittling a stick, and whistling at the top of his pipes. As soon as he saw Halsey, he rose, with the alacrity a slave always assumed when a white man appeared on the scene, and, shouldering a bag that was lying by him, trudged off as fast as his slim legs could carry him.

It was surprising how fast he got over the ground. Halsey's long strides did not seem to lessen the distance between them as they wended their way along the same road. An enormous plantation-hat, the broad brim of which covered neck and shoulders, a meal-bag, a slender body clad in blue jacket and trousers, and a pair of nimble yellow legs, composed a figure that Halsey thought he could sketch with a circle and six straight lines, but which kept steadily in front of him all the way to Dobbin's gate, where he lost sight of it.

Dobbin was a plain English farmer, who had settled in Virginia some years before. But, like so many of our later English settlers, the world had not gone well with him. He had been unfortunate in the choice of a farm, particularly in the unhealthiness of its locality. He and his family had been harassed with the chills and fevers that lurk here and there along the course of the river.

He had, moreover, found it almost impossible to get along with negro-labor, and his reserved English manners had not tended to make him popular with his white neighbors. Halsey's coming had been a most happy event for him ; and, though they were not on the same social footing, a very friendly intercourse had sprung up between them.

It was in Halsey's power to do many kind acts for his countryman, not the least of which was to take him every Sunday evening the English papers and periodicals that had accumulated the preceding week. Dobbin, a rough, blunt, red-headed man, the very type of the middle-class rural Briton, said, "Halsey and his papers were like a fresh bit of the old country in this nigger-ridden, fever-stricken land."

The visit having been paid, Dobbin and his wife cheered with friendly chat, and the children amused with a pile of pictorial papers, Halsey rose to go. "You have quite a stretch of forest between you and the main road," he said to his host, who accompanied him to the door.

"Yes ; and it's just my luck to have it between me and the road, instead of between me and the river. Folks about here tell me woods keep off the chills."

"You had better begin at once, then, and plant trees between you and the river. I wonder you have not done it before," said Halsey.

"Plant trees for some other fellow to reap the benefit when we are all dead with the ague," returned Dobbin, who was not of a hopeful turn of mind.

Halsey laughed at his friend's grumbling, and took his leave.

Day was still lingering in the open fields and on the river ; but in the woods a solemn twilight reigned, and the mists rising from the water were gradually enveloping every thing in a soft, mysterious haze.

The burning September heat was being tempered with a delicious coolness which the unwary would have enjoyed without misgiving. But Halsey had been so often warned against the malaria that stalks abroad after nightfall at this season, that he buttoned up his coat, and quickened his step, so as to reach home before it was quite dark.

Feeling the soft caress of the damp air on his cheek, he thought, what a seductive foe this malaria was ! how it wooed its victim forth with balmy breath, and betrayed him with a kiss ! Swinging his cane lightly to and fro, indulging in fanciful thoughts about this deadly but invisible enemy of mankind, that so successfully eludes the pursuit of science, and wishing it had a tangible shape that he could fell it with an honest blow, he was startled by the dark and very tangible presence of Michael, who stood before him with frowning brow and menacing attitude. These shoeless negro creatures had a very uncomfortable way of stealing noiselessly upon one, and Halsey was momentarily thrown off his guard. In the Arabian Nights, one reads of a merchant, who, travelling into a far country, stopped, one day, beneath the shade of a tree, to refresh himself with a simple repast of bread and dates. Having eaten the dates, he cast aside the stones, quite innocently as he supposed. His surprise and disgust were intense, when a great black genie, whose head

touched the clouds, rose out of the ground, and accused him of having put out one of his — the genie's — eyes with a date-stone.

Halsey's feelings were, for an instant, of a similar nature when he saw Michael barring his passage. The negro had evidently been lying in wait in a bend of the road, so as to come upon him unexpectedly.

"What do you mean by getting in my way?" said Halsey angrily, as Michael planted himself in front of him.

"Stop, mars'r: I'se got somethin' to say to you," replied Michael with mingled servility and defiance.

"I have no time to listen to any thing you have to say," said Halsey, his blood rising, but restraining himself with effort as he moved to one side with the intention of passing on. Michael, without hat or shoes, his shirt open at the throat disclosing a black, brawny chest, was such a repulsive-looking creature, Halsey recoiled from touching him, to thrust him aside, which was his first impulse. The young Englishman felt his gorge rise with the race-prejudice which has clung so persistently to the Anglo-Saxon in this country. Michael saw the movement, and changed his position so as to bring himself directly in Halsey's way again.

"No, you don't, mars'r," he said with a sardonic grin: "you mus' stay here long enough for me to tell you dat de yaller gal Chloe done promise to marry me Christmus, an' if I ketch you foolin' roun' her agin I'll kill you. I don't keer if dey does hang me den."

This was unbearable. With a swift movement Halsey raised his heavy cane, and brought it down with all his

strength ; and Michael, who was unprepared for the attack, received the full force of the powerful blow on his head.

Halsey, who had had no experience of the hardness of the African skull, was astounded to find that Michael, instead of being stunned, scarcely winced, but was quick enough to take advantage of his adversary's surprise, to wrest the cane from his grasp, and hurl it into the woods.

"Dey done take my gun away from me, and dey mout say yo' stick was arms, and I want ter talk peaceable to you, mars'r, widout no arms 'cep' dese black fellows ;" and the negro grinned complacently at his own great sinewy arms.

"I will not hear," said Halsey infuriated, and aiming a straight-out blow between the negro's eyes. Michael's method was utterly unscientific ; but he was a capital dodger, and Halsey's well-aimed fist beat the air. The blood of both combatants was up now, and they closed with a hand-to-hand tussle.

They were pretty fairly matched ; and the contest would probably have been a protracted one, if Halsey had not, unluckily, caught his heel in a root that straggled across the unfrequented road, and lost his balance. This gave Michael the advantage ; and Halsey felt that it was all up with him, when there broke cheerily upon the air a loud, shrill whistle, which Halsey recognized as that of his merry little friend of the meal-bag. The lad was returning the way he came, and Halsey, whose back was turned, did not see him ; but Michael, looking over his adversary's shoulder,

saw through the evening mist the dim outline of the boy's figure coming towards them. Instantly his arms relaxed their hold on Halsey, his eyes protruded with horror, his breath came quick, and his face assumed the ashy hue which is a negro's way of turning pale.

"De Lord Almighty!" he gasped, and, turning on his heel, ran away at the top of his speed without once looking round. This unaccountable behavior seemed to Halsey the strangest part of his strange adventure. It was incredible that the unexpected appearance of a mere boy, a mulatto at that, should have caused such undisguised terror in an immense brute like Michael. The boy, too, had disappeared, frightened, probably, by the sight of angry disputants, and had either taken refuge in the woods, or vanished in upper air, for aught Halsey knew, so strange and sudden had the whole thing been. He was disgusted with himself for having been drawn into a contest with a filthy negro.

This institution of negro slavery, that he had so prudently resolved to ignore and have nothing to do with, so long as he was a guest in a Southern home, met him in some disagreeable or dangerous form at every turn. His feet were becoming, day by day, more entangled in a network of difficulties from which he could not escape. He shook himself to see if he were not in some horrid dream; and, finding that his recent encounter had been only too real, he hurried home to take a bath, and change his dress. "Faugh! The filthy brutes! Pity they were not left in Africa to make pyramids of each other's wooden skulls," were the ejaculations forced from him by his latest experience with one of the race.

Had Halsey lived in Lower Virginia all his life, he would have known the story of "the miller's boy of Horn's Neck" from his childhood, and been sufficiently acquainted with negro superstitions to better understand what seemed to him Michael's inexplicable terror.

Ignorance, as the proverb goes, is the mother of superstition; and there are no people so densely ignorant, or so wildly superstitious, as the negroes.

The constitution of their minds makes it easier for them to believe the improbable than the probable; and, besides the superstitions they have adopted from the ignorant whites in this country, they have inherited dark, uncanny traditions from their African ancestors.

They have mysteries connected with every occurrence, from the falling of a pin to the shooting of a star. Ghosts, demons, witches, warnings, presentiments, are more real to them than the common things of life.

One of the most popular ghost-stories, one that had been in circulation and implicitly believed among them for a hundred years or more, was that of the miller's boy. It was said that a miller by the name of Horn, a man of ungovernable temper, on one occasion becoming impatient and angry with his servant-boy for remaining on an errand longer than was necessary, beat him to death. Ever since the tragic occurrence, the boy's spirit was reported at certain times to walk the earth; and it had been remarked that his appearance always foreshadowed danger or disaster to the negro, individually or collectively.

Michael's mind at this time was peculiarly sensitive to portents, omens, and the like. He believed, like the Puritans of old, that he and his people were in a special manner under Divine guidance, — that the signs of earth and sky were all intended as encouragements or warnings to his race.

Not possessing the key to these supernatural mysteries, Halsey had been bewildered by Michael's sudden flight ; but he was glad to be rid of the fellow on any terms, and to get back to Westover without further adventure.

It was about dusk, and nearly tea-time when he reached the house : so he went at once to the dining-room in search of the major, in order to excuse himself until he had taken the self-promised bath ; but the major was not there. The tea-table was spread, however, and the candles were lighted. Halsey was more tired than he realized ; and, not finding his friend, he dispossessed some dogs of the sofa, and threw himself wearily thereon to wait for the major's appearance.

The immense room was dimly lighted by a single pair of candles, whose flame was protected from the flare of the open windows by the tall glass shades of pre-gaslight times, which the next generation will look upon as relics of the ancients, and speculate as to their possible use. But the two tiny points of light had not been without attraction : a bat had wandered in from the twilight, and was circling above Halsey's head in a frightened flutter, searching for egress. One moment its black outstretched wings, flying above the candles, spread a dark canopy of shadow on the ceil-

ing ; the next it had disappeared in the distant, dusky corners of the room.

The bat flying round and round, the dogs dozing in an arm-chair, Capt. Cook circumnavigating the globe, seemed to get into Halsey's brain in the most inconsequent manner. He made several ineffectual attempts to disentangle them, and then fell into a profound slumber. He slept for some time, and woke suddenly from one of those dreams that seem to be of long duration, but which probably begin and end in a moment of time, and are occasioned by the very sound that awakens.

He dreamed that he was drilling an awkward squad of soldiers, a blundering set of fellows that found it as easy to go through the manual as a herd of cows would have done.

He had called out "Ground arms," when, sure enough, he heard what seemed to be the sharp ring of falling muskets.

He started to his feet as soon as he distinguished the reality from the dream, and went to the window that looked on the portico ; for the sound came from that direction, and was like the rattle of muskets on a pavement. The floor of the portico was tiled with squares of black and white marble ; and Halsey even thought he heard the shuffle of retreating footsteps over the hard surface. But when he looked out on the calm, starlit evening, the sylvan scene was so peaceful, he concluded that his dream had been indeed all a dream, and went back to his sofa.

Soon after, the major came in, with the quick, im-

petuous step that characterized him, even now that he was an invalid, when he was disquieted or irritated.

"Bless my soul ! such people are enough to provoke a saint !" he was soliloquizing. "You there, Halsey ? Why, man, you look pale. That is something new."

"And you look just the other way. It strikes me you are rather red."

"Red ! I should think so. As red as blazes if it at all indicates how I feel. I am as mad as fire."

"What's up now ?"

"That Johnson, the infernal sneak I ordered off the place, has been skulking—he always seems to be skulking—about here again. I met him in the lane this evening, close to my gate."

"But the lane is free, is it not ?"

"Free ? yes. And he might remain in the lane forever, for aught I care : I should not notice him more than a toad. But the fellow had the audacity to speak to me."

"That was polite, I am sure, after all you have said to him."

"Polite ! who the devil wants his politeness ? But that is not the worst of it : he called me Major Carter. What right has a low pedagogue like that to pronounce my name after his own fashion ? Don't I know my own name ? It has been Carter," the major called it Ke-arter, "for fifteen generations. The Carters he knows, I dare say, are creatures who drive carts, but that is not my name. Come, let us take our tea, and forget the fellow."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GHOST.

THE negro Michael, who gloried in his superior size and strength, was possessed of great personal courage.

His boldness inspired the utmost confidence among his timid fellows, who liked to shelter their weakness behind his gigantic frame and bulldog ferocity. These characteristics made him a favorite leader, and it is not unlikely, had occasion offered, that he would have led a brilliant charge into the very jaws of death ; but, under the influence of superstitious fear, he was like a reed shaken by the wind. He trembled and shivered, and his enormous body swayed back and forth with the terror that shook his soul.

At these times his abject cowardice was such as to demoralize an army of negro heroes. This fact was illustrated in a singular manner at a secret meeting held on his own place. He was the proprietor of a small tract of half-reclaimed land, the thickly wooded portion of which was sometimes used by the negroes as a rendezvous. In order not to attract attention to their meetings, it was a part of the negro tactics never to assemble twice successively in the same place ; and, as their operations extended over a large section of

the State, it was all-important to have many hiding-places so sheltered from observation as to make these unlawful gatherings safe. Behind the woods on Michael's farm was a hollow of cleared land so dotted with bushy young pines, springing up to replace the felled trees, that a company of negroes squatting among them would not be noticeable, especially on a moonless, starless night. On such a night, in the dark before dawn, while the superior race were wrapped in tranquil slumber, Michael stood up to address an assembly of slaves who were plotting to achieve their freedom at any cost. He was not the same Michael whom Halsey had heard preaching murder, arson, and rapine, some weeks before, in the burial-ground at Westover. Since then he had been dreaming dreams and seeing visions, and his valor had departed. He was now a whining creature, who foretold ruin and disaster to his audience, and who counselled submission to the lot that was ordained by God. His hearers had been fired with courage and enthusiasm by the eloquence of Gabriel, now absent, carrying on the work in another neighborhood; but they were even more easily disheartened than encouraged.

Under the influence of Michael's gloomy forebodings, and of the horrible pictures he painted of their future fate, if they persisted in their present course, their high hopes were chilled, and they became utterly dispirited. They rocked to and fro, moaning piteously. This violent physical agitation, consequent upon emotional excitement, is a marked peculiarity of the race. A negro under the influence of religious feeling will

clap his hands, stamp, shout, and throw his body violently from side to side, as though he were possessed by a demon ; and his excitement will gradually communicate itself to an entire congregation, until it becomes a crowd of howling, dancing maniacs. The hope of freedom was an important element in their religion, the one most clear to their intelligence, and that pressed nearest home to their hearts. They considered themselves orthodox Bible Christians ; though their faith, for the most part, was founded on the few Bible texts in which Ethiopia is mentioned, which they believed referred entirely to their present condition. The one oftenest quoted was, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God." These few words were to them a trumpet-call, a prophecy of all temporal and eternal good. Their spiritual guides used them to conjure with, and, after the manner of more intelligent religionists, built on this slight foundation a great superstructure of theology. But Michael had found another text, not so familiar : "The Ethiopians shall also be slain by the sword." As it came out of "Scripter," it must be true, although it seemed to contradict the old one that had so often stirred their hearts ; and these simple souls were not sufficiently advanced in exegesis to reconcile the two.

They became entirely hopeless, seeing their leader stand there trembling, weakly passing his hand before his eyes as if to thrust aside some horrid phantasm that painted itself on the air.

"I has dreams and warnin's," he said : "I has visions of Jeemes River runnin' wid blood, — rich, red,

warm blood, not *white* blood : I see de woods full of people, stiff and still, 'cos ebery tree is a gallus, and from ebery gallus is hangin' a black man."

"O Lord ! O Lord !" broke from his audience.

"You may well call upon de Lord," Michael went on, "for he is agin dis thing. He done showed it to me in signs and wonders. De dogs howl roun' my house ebery night, and ebery night I dreams of death."

"De Lord is agin us," groaned some one in the crowd ; and they all took up the cry, "De Lord is agin us ! De Lord is agin us !"

"And worser dan all," said Michael, lowering his voice with mysterious horror, "de sperrit of de miller's boy of Horn's Neck walks o' nights. He is at ebery meetin' : I believe he is here now."

A shudder passed through the crowd, which instinctively huddled closer together, as if for mutual protection ; and every man glanced nervously over his shoulder to be sure that his neighbor was not the miller's boy.

Michael had reached his climax. He had succeeded in making his hearers as timid as himself. There was no need of saying much more, but he went on, —

"We must leab dis wuk of freedom to anoder generation."

"Dat's so : we'll leab it to our chillun's chillun," cried some one with alacrity, and the rest echoed the words with wild acclaim, —

"Dat's so ! dat's so ! Our chillun's chillun."

“Go home now to de hoe and de plough. Leab guns and swords to de white folks.”

“Dat we will, broder Michael. Hoe heap better’n gallus, any day.”

This sentiment met with universal approval ; and the assembly was on the point of breaking up, every man glad to go home with a whole skin to his master’s work, when something unexpected occurred.

Johnson, their white friend, had arrived at the meeting late. He was dismayed to find that Michael, by his cowardice, was undoing the work of months of discipline and organization. At first he did not understand how the change in Michael’s sentiments had been brought about. When the speaker began to talk of the miller’s boy, Johnson knew where he was.

He had something to say on that subject, himself. He mounted the stump that served as tribune, thrusting Michael aside. The latter, who had been unaware of his presence, stared in stupid, open-mouthed astonishment at this unlooked-for interruption of his eloquence. The delicate cripple waved him off with contempt. Michael was in the subdued temper, that a child might have intimidated him.

“My friends !” cried Johnson in an authoritative tone that arrested the crowd preparing to depart. His white face and clanging nasal voice always commanded respect and attention. They paused almost mechanically, although they were in eager haste to go.

“My friends, Michael is a coward, and he is making cowards of you all. Shame upon you for deserting your righteous cause at the bidding of a fright-

ened creature who does not know what he is talking about ! Think you your masters would set you free because some one tried to frighten them into it by telling silly ghost-stories ? No, they would laugh ; and you, if you are men, ought to laugh too. Ghosts, indeed ! You are surrounded by many dangers, it is true, but not of this kind. I have seen this miller's boy, and he is no ghost. He is something much more terrible. Now listen, all of you, while I tell you what he is."

There was a visible commotion among the negroes, who opened their mouths, and held their breaths to hear.

"He is a — spy." Johnson let the word fall like a thunderbolt, carrying a flash of light. The negroes howled at the vivid and sudden revelation of an unsuspected danger. "A spy and a traitor ! And you men, two hundred strong, to be scared, and to run away from a boy, one of your own color too ! I am ashamed of you ! Why, don't you know what ought to be done with a spy ? Don't you know the fate of traitors ? I will tell you, — he is a mark for every honest man's hand. A well-aimed blow would soon show if he were flesh and blood, or only a ghost. But I have something here that will set your mind at rest on that subject. Yesterday I was on the trail of the miller's boy when something frightened him, and he ran away. Now, you know, ghosts do not run away. They vanish out of sight as quietly as they come. More than this, the boy, in jumping a fence, dropped his meal-bag ; not a ghostly one, but a real

hempen bag, with meal in it ; not much, only a little, but it was the real article, such as you make ash-cakes of. I need not tell you that ghosts do not drop meal-bags, nor do they eat ash-cakes. They and their clothing are thin air, that you can see, but cannot handle. Now, here is the bag the miller's boy dropped yesterday. You can all see and examine it for yourselves. It has a private mark on it that probably some of you may know. I brought it with me as a witness of treachery, to put you on your guard against spies : I did not dream that Michael would be before me to warn you against ghosts !”

Johnson spoke very slowly and distinctly, as though he were speaking to children, which indeed he was, pausing at the end of every sentence, that it might be received and understood before advancing to a new thought. His unhurried manner calmed their excitement ; and his plain, common-sense statements carried conviction with them. Many came forward to examine the bag, and before his discourse was ended they had recovered something of their former spirits and courage.

Their groans and sighs gave place to more cheerful exclamations. They dispersed quietly, their fears diverted from vague spiritual foes they could not combat, to a real living enemy whom every man was interested in discovering and putting out of the way.

Even Michael forgot to tremble as it gradually dawned upon him that he had been deceived by his own fears. He, too, examined the bag ; and a horrible suspicion thenceforth took possession of him. His

terror at once gave way to an inextinguishable desire for vengeance.

Johnson had achieved a master-stroke of policy, the end of which was fated to be a surprise to all concerned.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOST MUSIC-LESSON.

IN the fine old hall at Dunmore stood one of those tall clocks that record not only the hour, but the day, the month, and the phase of the moon.

Of all articles of furniture, surely this old-fashioned English timepiece is the most lovable, the most fit to preside among our household gods.

Its stately presence is so worthy the tidings it has to proclaim. It quite puts to shame the gayly decked little French *pendule* that seeks to cover the solemn flight of time with roses, cupids, and the like, and which go oftener wrong than right. Nothing is more characteristic of the difference between the two nations.

The tall English clock is such an excellent time-piece. It looks so honest and upright; its face is so bright, its voice so cheery and sweet.

It speaks to us, it tells us something. It keeps us company with the incessant chatter of the seconds and the musical roll-call of the hours. And it not only speaks to us, but has spoken to generations gone before, and will tell the same unchanging story to those who come after. It is the connecting link between us and them, as year by year, with unvarying steadiness,

it marks the flight and changes of time ; summer, winter, seedtime, and harvest.

The following morning Halsey was standing before the clock in the Dunmore hall, a roll of music in his hand, waiting for Homoselle, with whom he had an engagement. Whiling away the time as best he could, until she made her appearance, he was interested to read on the dial that it was made in London a century before. When the hour of noon rang out, in twelve sonorous strokes, he fell to musing how strange it was that the clock had preserved its deep, rich tone for a hundred years, while the voices of the generations of men growing up round it had so materially changed.

The soft, drawling utterance of these Virginians was not without its charm, especially in the women ; but it was not the full round voice of the race from which they sprung.

Reflections like this were constantly suggesting themselves to Halsey, who every day saw something to remind him of England, and how like and yet how different was the nation she had planted on this side of the water.

His musings were put to flight by a light footstep and a rustle of feminine drapery above. He looked up, expecting to see Homoselle descending the stairs, and was sensible of a blank feeling of disappointment when he found it was Bertie.

The fact is, he had discovered of late that Bertie bored him ; not that there was any thing of the bore about her, except that she was not Homoselle. Hal-

sey honestly liked her ; but everybody knows how flavorless is the society of the person one likes, when one is impatient to be with the person one loves.

She came blithely down the stairs to meet him in a hastily-made toilet. It was early in the day for Bertie, who ordinarily postponed dressing presentably until dinner-time, or at least until there was a likelihood of seeing company. The effect of her toilet was not bad when she had time to put her whole mind to it ; but on this occasion she had changed her morning-gown in a hurry. She had learned accidentally, only a few moments before, that Halsey was coming about noon to try a new song with Homoselle, who was to play the accompaniment ; and she made ready to catch him before the music began. She had something to say to him.

She was not looking her best : her hair seemed in imminent danger of falling down and off ; little drifts of white powder lingered in the sheltered nooks and corners around her eyes and nose ; the knot of her neck-tie was under one ear ; and she was struggling with a pair of cuffs that would not be adjusted without her undivided attention.

Like most persons who are caught at a disadvantage in the matter of dress, she sought to make up for it by a flow of soul.

“Is that you, Mr. Halsey? I thought I recognized your step. See what it is to have an eye to mark your coming, and look brighter when you come ! Not that my eye would not have brightened at anybody’s coming to-day. I have nothing to read, my letters are all

answered, and my embroidery-cotton used up. Here I am, high and dry on the sands of time, waiting to be entertained ! But I am particularly glad to see you, there are so many things I want to talk to you about."

Halsey's spirits fell rapidly during this airy little speech, to which Bertie's feet kept time, as she pattered down the steps.

"Now, really?" was all he found to say in response to what seemed the promise of a long conversation.

The song he had come to try was, of course, the flimsiest pretext. Halsey could play his own accompaniment far better than Homoselle, who had little skill as a musician. The real thing was being together, and it was necessary to find excuses for bringing this about as often as he liked : a song was as good as any thing else. It was very pleasant standing beside Homoselle in the drawing-room, dim and cool with its closed shutters, while her hands wandered over the yellow keys of the antiquated piano, honestly trying to find the right note, and he careless whether she found it or not.

Indeed, Halsey, who was not clever at inventing excuses, congratulated himself on the success of this one, which he had already tried more than once. The practising, which brought him very near Homoselle, drove everybody else away, the very combination of circumstances he desired.

But Bertie had begun to get impatient of the music-lessons. She could not see the drift of them. Nothing ever came of them : the song was never learned, as far as she could make out.

"Homoselle is writing letters for her father, and can't play your accompaniment this morning," she went on to say. "I would do it myself, but you know I do not play; and, besides, I am like Dr. Johnson, in thinking music 'only the least disagreeable of noises.'"

Halsey groaned in the spirit, though he gave a rigid smile at Bertie's pleasantry. She was too near-sighted to perceive the precise nature of his mirth, and mistook the broadening of his countenance for genuine hilarity.

"You have a fine, manly voice, though. I can perceive that," she continued; "and I confess it sometimes moves even me. I feel a moisture in my eyes, and a shiver down my back. I think music must be very good when it does that. Don't sit over there. Here, the sofa is more comfortable."

She ensconced herself in a corner of the sofa, and motioned him to take a seat beside her.

It was a fortunate thing for Halsey, that he had a sheet of music in his hands. It was an immense comfort to him during this interview. He petted it, opened it, rolled it up again, peeped down the cylinder it formed, as though it were a telescope, opened it anew, and rolled it up again contrariwise. It was the same assistance to him that a fan is to a woman under similar circumstances.

"By the by, how is the major?" asked Bertie.

"I hardly know," Halsey answered with alacrity, much relieved at the turn her thoughts had taken. He had feared a direct home question, for of late she

had been very searching in her inquiries. It almost seemed that she suspected something, and was bent on extorting a confession.

But the major was neutral ground. Halsey was quite willing to talk about him.

"I hardly know," he said: "since his last attack I have watched him so anxiously, I am no longer a judge of his condition. I don't know whether to trust my hopes, or my fears."

"You like the major very much?" she questioned, looking straight at him, shaking a little snowfall from her long lashes in the swift upraising of her eyes. They were pretty eyes, notwithstanding the pearl powder on their fringes, long, dark, and brilliant. Halsey smiled slightly with the piquant sense of pleasure a man derives from a woman's prettiness, — a sentiment quite different from, and often more seductive than, the homage he gives to beauty.

"*Like* him! That scarcely expresses it. He is the best friend I ever had, in that he has been the means of giving me more happiness" —

Halsey stopped short with the tell-tale color, which was the bane of his life, suffusing his face. He had been on the eve of making the very confession he wished to avoid.

He did not give his companion credit for astuteness in leading him to this point, but blamed his own heedlessness.

He was always betraying himself. His friends told him his thoughts were even more transparent than his complexion; and, somehow, his thoughts had lately acquired a habit of turning in one direction.

Bertie did not seem to notice his confusion, but gave him time to recover himself, while he smoothed out his music.

"More happiness than I could have anticipated in America," he added, rather lamely, for the enthusiasm with which he had begun.

"I hope you have been so happy here that you will not go away," said Bertie, lowering her lashes, with a tinge of sentiment in her voice.

"You are very kind ; but, indeed, I shall have to go away very soon."

"And won't you ever come back to America?"

"Yes, the very first moment I can."

"You find this climate suits you so well, I wonder you should go to England at all."

"Bread-and-butter takes me back. I have my fortune to make, you know."

"You don't mean to say that you could ever earn your own bread-and-butter?"

"Who else, I should like to know? Don't I look like a fellow who could earn his own provender?"

"You look more like a fellow who could eat it, and a good deal of it, after it was made. But I don't believe that is what is taking you back. You have a much less prosaic reason, I am sure."

"Now, what might that be?"

"You are in love with some English girl."

Halsey laughed. "You are not good at guessing, Miss Despard, spite of your nationality. I love all the English girls ; but a fellow can't marry them all, and I have not been in England long enough of late years to fall in love with one."

"Then, you must marry an American girl, and settle here. We can't spare you."

"And are you quite sure an American girl would marry me?" he asked, rather disingenuously.

"Now, don't play humility. You know, ever since you came the girls have all been smiling, and, what is more significant, the men have all been frowning, at you. It is as though a whale had floundered into our mill-pond, scattering the minnows right and left. Then, besides your own merits, you have the irresistible charm of novelty. We have never had an Englishman domesticated among us before. It has made a veritable lion of you."

"Miss Despard! Miss Despard! How you flatter me! You first call me a whale, then a lion."

"Oh, well! there are sea-lions, you know," Bertie went on, nothing daunted; "and there is not a girl in the neighborhood who would not jump at you."

"Would you?" he asked mischievously, entering into what he supposed to be her humor of the moment, though his eyes and ears watched for Homoselle.

"Of course I would," she answered so gravely as to embarrass him; "and I have always felt sure you had a *tendresse* for me. It is droll you have never spoken of it before. Englishmen need so much more encouragement than our men! Then, I know you had scruples about not being rich enough to marry. But that never really interferes with a man's addressing a woman if he is very much in earnest."

The effect of these words on Halsey was that of the first coil of a constrictor thrown round its prey.

"But, Miss Despard!" he exclaimed, making a struggle to free himself.

She did not heed the interruption, but went on winding more and more closely round the victim.

"It is fortunate you are such an immense creature," she said, glancing at him through half-closed lids, the better to take in the effect of her braw wooer, who sat there rolling up his score so tightly as to destroy its legibility, while his varying color turned from red to white, and back again to red, all of which she thought signs becoming a bashful lover. "I always liked big men. One is apt to like one's opposites, you know. I suppose that is one reason you took a fancy to me."

Halsey thought with a shiver of all the stories he had heard of the way in which American girls gobbled up men. He said nothing: indeed, he was so overwhelmed with astonishment, he could find nothing to say. He let her talk on, with a forlorn hope that her own words might suggest something upon which he could hang an objection, or find a loop-hole of escape.

"And Englishmen," she continued, as if analyzing the motives of a sentiment about which there could be no doubt, "think so much of traditions and good family. My father used to say it was very important to choose from a good nest; and ours is the best family in America. A great many Virginians claim to be descended from nobility, but we claim descent from royalty. You have never seen our family-tree, have you? My mother was a Taliaferro, you know.

Then this house, built by the Earl of Dunmore, is one of the few historic houses in the country."

"Miss Despard!" said Halsey desperately, when she paused for breath. He was not going to allow himself to be entangled in a net, like a hero in a novel, for want of the five words of explanation which a man in real life would speak if he were a man at all; and, though he spoke desperately, he tried to speak cheerfully:—

"Miss Despard, it isn't fair to chaff a fellow like that. You know you would not look at me, even if I had the presumption to think of such a thing. I haven't a drop of royal blood in *my* veins."

"I don't mind that," she said softly, and with kind condescension: "I have never expected to meet with a man quite my equal in that respect; but in every thing else you are the most suitable person I know. My brother will be delighted."

With a ludicrous sense of dismay, Halsey thought Mr. Despard would more likely be disgusted to find his daughter's suitor engaged to another woman. "But, Miss Despard," he again interrupted in an agonized tone,—for he heard footsteps advancing, and she was just the impetuous person to introduce him to the first member of the family who appeared, as her *fiancé*,—"indeed you do not understand me."

"Oh, yes! I understand," she said with calm, unruffled voice, and coquettish smile: "I have been through this kind of thing so often before."

"But this isn't this kind of thing, you know," he said, wiping the dampness from his brow, for the

steps outside were coming nearer : " I esteem you as the best of friends, but there is another whom I have asked to be my wife."

Bertie turned white to the roots of her hair, and her eyes flashed dangerously. She laughed a low, gurgling laugh, that Halsey was too perturbed to notice sounded very unlike her ordinary merry peal.

A moment passed before she said any thing, then she rattled on in her usual manner ; the twitching of the corners of her mouth and the quivering of her nostrils alone indicating that she spoke with suppressed excitement, —

" You delightfully ingenuous creature ! you are as good as a play ; ha, ha, ha ! Didn't you see that I was teasing you into telling me your secret ? For weeks I have known something was troubling you, and I made up my mind there was a woman at the bottom of it. I was dying of curiosity, and I could not help trying to get it all out of you. I succeeded in half the time I thought I should. The proverb says, ' The net is spread in vain in the sight of any bird.' Men are not a bit like birds in that respect. They walk straight into the first trap set for them. It seems to be a law of their nature, the more obvious the trap, the more certainly they are caught : I mean, if it is set by a woman."

Bertie's words, which Halsey took in good faith, fell like oil on his troubled spirit. The steps in the hall passed on without entering ; and the small tempest into which he had lashed himself needlessly, as she made him believe, subsided into an overwhelming

sense of shame that he had added another egregious blunder to the long list with which his life had been adorned.

"I have made an ass of myself, as usual," he said; "but you ought to forgive me, Miss Despard, because you know you had set your mind on making me do it. I" —

Bertie did not let him finish: "Don't bother about that. I am used to your blunders: in fact, I rather like them; you would not be yourself without them. They are as natural to you as the color of your hair. You began with a blunder the first hour of our acquaintance, and I suppose you will go on to the end of the chapter."

"I am afraid I shall."

"But I must say you have been a snake in the grass. You took such pains to proclaim yourself fancy-free when you first came: to hear you speak, one would have supposed you had taken vows of celibacy. What needless insincerity if you were engaged all the time!"

Halsey looked painfully embarrassed. "No, no! You do not understand that all this has come upon me since I have been here."

"What do you mean?" cried Bertie, darting a startled look of inquiry into his eyes, speaking through set teeth, while her breath came quick and hard.

"Can you not guess, Miss Despard, that I love your niece?"

"Homoselle?" she cried in a high, sharp key, "ha, ha! Homoselle?"

“Yes, Homoselle,” said Halsey stoutly, not liking her manner. “Why not? If matches are made in heaven, — and I see no reason to doubt it, — she is the woman God intended for me.” Halsey had such a stolid, solemn way of expressing himself, that Bertie’s attempt at playfulness was singularly out of tune.

“Of course ! of course ! every lover thinks the same thing,” she said, with a thin little laugh. Then, her face assuming an interrogative expression, Halsey felt that she was about to ask a leading question. He thought, with a groan, that he had made confessions enough. Fortunately the clock in the hall struck the half-hour, and while it was still vibrating he rose to go. His interview, that had seemed to drag its tortuous length over a week, had lasted one hour and a half.

“I promised the major to be back at two, in time for the boat. He is expecting his lawyer from Richmond to-day, and I am going to meet him.”

They parted with a show of their accustomed cordiality ; but he was sore with a sense of having been successfully pumped, and she remained in a brown study long after his departure.

One little incident helped to restore Halsey’s good-humor before he got away. In the closely trellised walk he met Homoselle, looking fresh and cool in a white dress, her hands filled with beautiful ferns which he thought he recognized as the kind that grew in Deep Run Wood. She was puzzled by his discontented countenance, his crumpled roll of music, and his reproachful “Why, where have you been?”

“In the woods, trying to make believe I was

looking for ferns, but really looking for a lost young man."

"I hope you found him," said Halsey still cross.

"I have found him now," she said, linking her arm in his, and retracing a few steps with him. His ill-humor melted away like icicles in the sun. It was almost worth while getting ruffled, to be smoothed out after this fashion. "And where have *you* been?" she asked.

"I? I have been in the drawing-room according to appointment, waiting for you to come and play my accompaniment."

"Why, that is strange! I was told that you had not come, and I went to meet you."

"*Who* told you I had not come?" he asked pugnaciously.

"Let me see, — Bertie's maid, Lottie, I think."

"And *I* was told that you were writing letters for your father."

"That was only a notion of Bertie's. When I went to papa's office he said she was mistaken; and I betook myself to the woods to waylay you."

"Humph!" growled Halsey viciously.

"To think," said Homoselle regretfully, "that I should have missed the music for such an absurd mistake!"

"The music! I didn't care a penny for the music. It was you I missed. As to mistakes, there seem to be no end of mistakes to-day. Homoselle, I told your aunt that I loved you."

"You did?"

“I couldn’t help it.”

“I am glad it is no worse. You looked as if you had something terrible to announce. Had I been anybody but myself, Bertie might have suspected before now. But I am only Homoselle. Did you say any thing about my — my” —

“Your sentiments? No : I ran away in time to escape that, you know,” he said triumphantly.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON A BAD FOOTING.

BERTIE was greatly disgusted by Halsey's revelations. She had been so sure that she was the primary object of his admiration.

She was indignant, moreover, that she had been kept in the dark until his secret was extorted from him. Finally she persuaded herself that this was the cause of her anger against the culprits. There was a storm when she and Homoselle met.

"It is not so much your being engaged to Mr. Halsey," she said, tapping her foot impatiently, — "I have nothing to do with that, — but your being so underhanded about it."

"But I tell you we are not engaged," retorted Homoselle with heat.

"I don't care what you call it: it amounts to the same thing, and you have been so unnecessarily deceitful."

"Deceitful! How can you talk so? Have I ever pretended not to like Mr. Halsey? Anybody with half an eye might have seen," said Homoselle, burying her face in her cool bunch of ferns.

"Seen? Thank you: I have as good eyes as anybody, but I never thought to look for a young lady showing her preference for a man."

"Have you never shown any preferences yourself? Have you ever thought it necessary to tell any one of your affairs?"

"But," continued Bertie, ignoring these questions, "I suppose Mr. Halsey must have seen your preference for him; notably," she added, a new light dawning upon her, "the day you wept over him."

This shaft told: Homoselle reddened with vexation, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I don't know why you should be so unkind: I don't suppose you want him for yourself?"

"*I!* Come, that is a good joke. Mr. Halsey would scarcely presume so far. It is all very well to be kind to the young fellow; but nobody knows who he is, while everybody knows he hasn't a penny. If he has any sense at all, he must know I do not hold myself so cheaply."

"Then we are both satisfied: I think Mr. Halsey only too good for me," said Homoselle with proud humility.

"Sweet sensibility! Oh, la!" laughed Bertie, sniffing at a bottle of cologne, to which she had recourse when she was out of sorts.

Homoselle would not stay to hear any more. She hurried away to her old hiding-place, her father's office, to be by herself. She knew from experience that solitude was best for calming a ruffled temper, and there she would be safe from interruption. Her father, as every one was aware, rode at this time of day; and persons having business with him were not likely to call until the hour of his return.

In the dim quietude of the shabby little office, her irritation soon disappeared. She had such a solid foundation for happiness, it was easy to forget trifling annoyances. Bertie always flaunted and taunted when she was put out, but she never really meant harm. Her anger, like her other emotions, was so transitory, so easily effaced by the next thing that occurred, it was idle to attach serious importance to what she said. Homoselle was always ashamed of being greatly moved by Bertie's sharp tongue ; for, while the sting it inflicted still smarted, Bertie herself had forgotten her words and her anger.

It may be remembered that the office also served as Skip's schoolroom. Homoselle, the sooner to get rid of her irritation, wanted to be doing something : so she began putting up his books in a more orderly fashion than he had left them in. Skip had said his last lesson for the summer. The time was drawing near for him to return to his regular school in town, and she had given him holiday for the few remaining days of his stay. She could not help smiling over the well-thumbed volumes whose blots and stains marked the boy's weary progress along the path of learning. This blurred page showed where he had been learning his *p*'s and *q*'s ; and that crumpled leaf testified to his difficulty in mastering the verb *aimer*, while he little dreamed that the day would come when he would have to learn these lessons all over again.

"Think of the devil," Homoselle said to herself as a light, uncertain step on the gravel-walk gave her warning that the imp of whom she was thinking was

about to make his appearance. "Why, Skip, back again like a bad penny? I thought you asked leave to pl'out?"

Some years before, in his babyhood, Skip had coined the word "pl'out" as a contraction for "play out;" and it continued to be a verb of good standing in the family.

"So I *am* going to pl'out. Who wants to be mewed up in the house, I'd like to know?" he said, looking eagerly under chairs and sofas. "But I came back for my ball: have you seen it anywhere, Homo?"

"No, I have not. Run away now, and don't bother."

"Who's botherin'? Can't a fellow look for his ball without your gettin' cross?"

"Why, yes," she said with compunction; "but you see, I have lost something too, and I came here to be by myself to see if I couldn't find it."

Skip, on his hands and knees, looked up interested. "You lost something? Your key-basket?"

"No, my equanimity."

Skip rubbed his nose thoughtfully: "I reckon you mean your temper, don't you?"

Homoselle nodded.

"Well, you ain't goin' to find it by yourself to-day, because Phil is lookin' all over the house for you, and he'll be comin' here next," said Skip, chuckling as he made a dive under the bookcase for his ball.

"That *is* a bother," cried Homoselle, gathering up her skirts to be as small as possible, and looking helplessly round for some chink to creep into. Unfortu-

nately the room had only one egress ; and, as Skip bounded out with whoop and halloo, Phil, booted and spurred, came clanging up the stone steps, and stood in the doorway. He appeared at his best, equipped for riding ; and Homoselle, who was provoked at the interruption, could not refuse a smile to his bright, handsome face, and eager delight at finding her. She released her imprisoned draperies, and resigned herself to a visit with the best grace she could.

Phil seemed to take in the situation at a glance. "Caught at last !" he cried, "and not a moment too soon. You look just plumed for flight. Come, now, you thought I was the overseer, or some other tiresome business fellow, and were making ready to escape, were you not ?"

"Yes. I was wondering whether I could not jump out of the window, as I have seen Chloe and Skip do."

"But, since I am not the overseer," he continued, nothing doubting, "perhaps you will stay a moment."

"Yes ; but I warn you I am not in the best of humors."

"Has that brat Skip been tormenting you as usual ?"

"No, indeed. Boys are troublesome certainly ; but, after all, a boy is a small trouble : mine to-day is of larger growth."

"A man, perhaps ?"

Homoselle laughed.

"Must I take your merriment as a sign that I have guessed rightly ?"

"No ; but you may take it as a sign that I am recovering a little of my good-humor."

"That is encouraging," said Phil, who, all this time, had been standing in the doorway, but who now left it, and took his seat on the sofa beside Homoselle. "And now," he continued, "won't you tell me who or what this grown-up trouble is?"

"No, indeed: this is not a confessional," she said quickly, conscious of a gentle insistence unlike his usual manner.

"It might easily become one," he replied, looking critically around the room with a lazy twinkle in his eye. "The walls are thick, the light is dim, if not religious, and nobody over-near."

"But you are not in the least like a father-confessor," she said, amused at the contrast suggested by his dare-devil face and indolent ease of manner.

"Likely not," he murmured, stroking his silken moustache, that did not conceal the self-pleased smile that trembled in the corners of his finely-curved lips. "But, if I am not competent to receive confessions, there is no reason why I may not make one if I were so inclined, is there?"

"Certainly not, if to the proper person."

"I suppose I must be the judge of that."

"Not altogether."

"Then you shall be the judge. I have a confession to make to you."

"Oh, no! not to me," she said, her heart beginning to flutter, while she wondered what Phil was driving at.

"Homoselle," he cried severely, nettled at her want of responsiveness, and coming suddenly to a point he had predetermined to reach by gentle approaches, —

“does it never occur to you that I am in love with you?”

“Never!”

“Then it is because you *will* not see,” he cried vehemently. “Is it possible you have not noticed how I have been following you about like a spaniel, trying to get a smile from you, for weeks?”

“I have noticed your following me about lately, but I did not attribute it to love.”

“Then what, in Heaven’s name, did you attribute it to?”

“You will excuse me, Phil, if I tell you I thought it the result of pique,” she said with spirit. Her fluttering nerves were under control now, and her temper was rising again. Phil’s words revived a grudge she had against him. This following her about, as he called it, had succeeded in spoiling sport in a most unconscionable manner. She and Halsey had been sorely put to it, to elude Phil’s persistent attentions.

“Pique!” echoed Phil, starting up, and beginning to pace the floor. When he had, in a measure, worked off the surprise occasioned by her keen home-thrust, he came and stood penitently before her. “You are right, Homoselle,” he said humbly, “it began in pique. It infuriated me to see how much you cared for that in” — a flash from her eyes made him modify his expression, and congratulate himself on the facility with which it was accomplished, — “that in — Englishman: there is no harm in calling him an Englishman, is there?” with an air of injured innocence. “A man with a foot like a beefsteak!” he continued, tapping

his own slender, finely-arched foot with his riding-whip.

Homoselle blushed guiltily. Beautiful feet were almost universal among the men and women of her class, and highly prized as a distinction of caste ; but Halsey's truly English foot, though a good, serviceable member, was more remarkable for size than shape, — a fact to which Homoselle persistently tried to shut her eyes.

"But he has beautiful hands," she said apologetically ; the next moment regretting that she should have appeared to think Halsey needed any apology, — "strong, white, beautifully-shaped, beautifully-kept hands."

"Pshaw ! who cares for beauty in a man's hands ? "

"And it is only fair," she continued thoughtfully, following Phil's satisfied glance at his own pedal extremity, "that his foot should be larger than yours : you know he is a larger man *every* way."

There was no mistaking the intention of the slight stress on the word "every."

Phil winced. "You are severe," he said angrily.

"His is too large a nature, for instance, to sneer at another man's personal defects."

"Come, come, Homoselle : you are pushing your advantage too far. It *was* a mistake to begin with Halsey's foot, which, large as it is, is small in comparison with the real cause of my antagonism."

"And pray, what may that be ? "

"I prefer not to speak of that now. I wish to speak of myself. I confess that man's attention to

you first attracted my interest. But don't think the less of my devotion on that account. Every thing has to have a beginning of some kind, even the most stupendous things. You know a stupid little apple drove Adam out of Paradise, and taught Newton the laws of gravitation. I swear to you, my love is more stupendous than either Eden or gravitation."

"And do you think it quite honorable to try to bring down the game another man has flushed?"

"There spoke the true sportsman's daughter. Ah, Homoselle! if you at all appreciated that I was laying my heart and my life at your feet, you could not coolly make similes."

"You forget your own ingenious remarks about Adam and Newton. But I ask you in all seriousness, Phil, do you think it quite fair to try and supplant another man, especially," this with heightened color, "when, as you intimate, he is in a fair way to be successful?"

Phil, who had taken his seat, bounced up again. "You don't mean it, Homoselle: you can't be in earnest! I never dreamed it was more than a young girl's foolish fancy for a foreigner," he said, beginning his furious walk anew. "To go back to your simile, to be quite accurate, it is not a man who flushes game, but a dog. I look upon this Englishman as a" —

He did not finish his sentence: Homoselle rose too, white and trembling with anger. "I will not hear another word," she said, going to the door; but Phil barred her passage.

"Forgive me, dear," he said humbly: "I must

“ speak. Spurn me if you will, but don’t throw yourself away on Halsey. He is utterly unworthy of you.”

“ Let me pass,” she said haughtily : “ it is unmanly to keep me here against my will.”

“ So it is, rascally,” he replied reddening, and turning to open the door, but he was saved the trouble. Mr. Despard, whose approach had not been heard in the heat of their angry discussion, entered at this moment.

“ What is up now ? ” he asked, looking in astonishment from one pale, excited face to the other.

Homoselle was about to speak, but Phil forestalled her. “ Only this, Mr. Despard,” he said in a husky, trembling voice : “ that I have been offering myself to your daughter, and she has refused me.”

Mr. Despard’s countenance fell. “ Is it possible ! ” he exclaimed, in sad surprise : “ Phil, I cannot tell you how sorry I am for this.”

If Mr. Despard’s hopes for his daughter’s future had ever taken definite shape, they were that she might become Phil’s wife, and the mistress of his beautiful establishment ; but, as the young man had never evinced more than a friendly interest in Homoselle, he had not allowed his mind to dwell on the desirability of such an arrangement.

When he had fully taken in the import of Phil’s words, he felt actually stunned by the fact that Homoselle had let slip such a brilliant opportunity ; and for what ? a long, uncertain engagement with a foreigner. In the solitude of his office, after the young people had gone, he pondered long, and groaned in spirit, over this latest misfortune.

Homoselle scorned to believe Phil's insinuations against Halsey's character; but his words had not been wholly without effect.

A week later she asked Bertie, casually as it were, which was worse, an ugly hand, or an ugly foot.

Bertie's reply was prompt, and, as usual, very emphatic: —

“An ugly foot, of course: an ugly hand is a misfortune, but an ugly foot is a disgrace.”

CHAPTER XX.

THE CHALLENGE.

“The mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge’s wing.”

Proverb.

IT was twilight, great nature’s breathing-spell ; the quiet hour when day is over, and night not yet begun ; blind man’s holiday, when colors fade, and tired eyes rest on cool gray outlines.

Mr. Despard sat at one end of the portico, his chair tilted, his hands clasped behind his head, his eyes half closed, gazing out on the river. His mental gaze was concentrated on times long past.

As he sat there plunged in retrospection, some one came out of the house, and went quietly down the front steps. It was Chloe in search of Skip. Not finding him on the portico, she proceeded to look for him on the lawn.

Mr. Despard caught sight of her in passing. Her face was not discernible in the uncertain light ; but her figure, the turn of her head, the air of her dress, were unmistakable. He thought she had not seen him.

“My daughter,” he said in a gentle tone, intending to surprise but not to startle her.

The girl started and paused, then moved on more quickly.

"Ellie, darling," he repeated.

"'Tain't nobody but Chloe, sir," Chloe answered meekly, hurrying away.

Mr. Despard bit his lip, rose, and began pacing the portico in his old restless way. His retrospection had taken a disagreeable turn.

It was the first time he had ever taken one girl for the other, and yet it was not a surprising mistake. They were about the same height, and there was a certain resemblance in face and figure: added to this, Chloe wore an old dress of Homoselle's, which had acquired, as clothes will, something of the air of the first wearer. The great difference between the two was in the coloring, but it was too dark to discern that.

Soon after this little occurrence the lamps were lighted in the house, dispelling the twilight; the tea-bell rang, and the family began to drop one by one into the drawing-room, where Homoselle was waiting to pour out tea.

Skip, who ordinarily had to be hunted up and made ready for meals, appeared at the first tap of the bell, with scrupulously clean face, and hair so sleek as to give him a depressed expression. His holidays were drawing to a close, and he was on his best behavior. Every year, as the time approached for Skip to go back to school, he became miserable and heart-sick, and, like a certain other sick personage, so distressingly good as to be easily mistaken for a monk.

His eyes gleamed dangerously, though, at sight of Tommy, looking very solemn, with a waiter under his

arm, ready to "catch cups." Tommy was a temptation almost too great to be resisted. How Skip would have liked to trip him up as he walked back and forth, with great importance, to the tea-urn, having cups replenished !

As it was, he stuck his tongue in his cheek, in passing ; and Tommy, who never failed to take up the gauntlet, gave a little growl to indicate, that, though on parole in the drawing-room, with a fair field he was ready to pitch in.

Presently Mr. Despard entered from the portico, looking as cheerful as usual, having left his retrospections outside, in the twilight.

"Why, Skip, you look like a Methodist parson. Have you had your head under the pump?" he asked.

Even Tommy saw the point of the joke, and grinned ; for which Skip inwardly resolved to thrash him, and thought how hard it was to be good, with all the forces of nature opposing.

By and by Bertie and Phil Roy sauntered in. These two had drifted together a good deal of late : a common cause against Halsey had brought about quite a friendship between them, which Bertie was doing her best to develop into something better.

They had been taking a walk ; and Bertie's head and shoulders were enveloped in a black lace mantilla, fastened at the throat with a cluster of her favorite bleeding-hearts. She was looking pretty and *piquante* : she lighted up well, and was at her best by lamplight. Her eyes were dancing now with an expression of sa-

tirical amusement in which Phil evidently shared. His lips seemed to be hovering between a smile and one of those low, long-drawn whistles that express so much with so little.

They took their seats on a sofa farthest from the light, and began a low-toned, animated discussion of something that called forth many exclamations of wonder and commiseration.

"What's up now?" asked Mr. Despard, sipping his tea at ease in a great armchair, amused at their ostentatious mystery.

"English consols down," murmured Bertie in a low voice to Phil.

Homoselle caught the word "English," and glanced uneasily at the pair with a presentiment that she would not enjoy their joke.

"Tea, Phil?" she asked.

"No, thank you. Don't indulge in slops."

"Wait till you come to forty year," said Mr. Despard, sending up his cup to be refilled. "Come, now, out with it: what are you two whispering about, over there?"

"Only discussing a little adventure we had this evening," said Phil evasively.

"You would not be at all entertained, Frank. Would he, Phil?" said Bertie dryly.

"I think not. But I have something here, I am sure will interest you;" and Phil drew from his pocket a couple of fresh unfolded papers. "To-day's news."

"That *is* a treasure-trove," said Mr. Despard, drain-

ing the last sweet drop from his cup before sending it away ; and then putting on his glasses, and concentrating the lights on the centre-table, he buried his nose in a newspaper, and soon became immersed in politics.

“Don’t send away the tea, Homo : somebody is coming,” said Skip, slyly stuffing his pocket with cake from the waiter, while his cousin turned her head towards the door to see who the new-comer might be.

It proved to be Halsey, who entered, looking disturbed, with a fine crimson flush on his face.

“Just in time,” said Homoselle with a smile of welcome : “I was going to send the waiter away. Will you have your tea cold, or hot ? ”

“Cold, by all means, thank you,” said Halsey, taking his seat on the piano-stool, and fanning himself vigorously with a piece of sheet-music ; “with plenty of ice in it. It is terribly warm. Ah, yes ! I forgot : I promised never to talk about the weather ; but this seems to be exceptionally hot.”

He was glad to have attention drawn from himself just then, by Mr. Despard, who looked up from his paper to speak of the loss of an American steamer.

“The very one young Chapman, the son of a friend of mine, took passage in.”

“Chapman ! ” echoed Phil. “He was one of my college mates. Are there any particulars ? Read what it says.”

Mr. Despard adjusted his spectacles, and read aloud the short, unsatisfactory paragraph that first announced the loss of a steamer that caused very widespread distress in America.

An animated discussion followed in regard to the accident, its probable cause, ocean-steamers, and the like ; subjects of general interest, which the company, divided in many things, could converse about amicably, until Halsey quite innocently remarked, "Strange that one should ever cross the ocean except in a Cunarder !"

"Why so ?" asked Phil curtly.

"Well, really ! For no other reason than that experience has proved that they are safest."

"Are the vessels superior to those on the American line ?"

"I don't know : I never tried the American line ; but I suppose not, since they are all built in British waters. I suppose the difference lies in the management."

"How much we hear of the superiority of every thing British, nowadays !" said Phil pugnaciously.

Halsey laughed. "It has seemed to me quite the other way ; that is, as far as you are concerned, Mr. Roy."

"You are mistaken : I am content to let superiority speak for itself."

"Then we are agreed on that point. British steamers speak for themselves," said Halsey, taking his seat on a sofa by Homoselle, and beginning to talk with her, apart, of other things.

Mr. Despard, who, with his eyes bent on the newspaper, had watched this little passage-at-arms with anxiety (not knowing how far Phil's pugnacity, which had developed wonderfully of late, would carry him),

gave a satisfied grunt at his discomfiture, and plunged anew into politics.

Phil bit his lip, and fumed inwardly. He would have it out with that Englishman, yet. He wasn't going to stand the fellow's impudence, — a fellow who looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, and all the time behaving like a blackguard.

His temper was not a whit improved by what was going on at the other side of the room.

Homoselle was there, looking very happy, on a sofa between Skip and Halsey. Skip had fallen asleep during the long discussion of ocean-steamers, with his head on her shoulder. Halsey sat on the other side, twirling a bit of yellow jessamine in his fingers; and his attitude displayed unconsciously what a good-looking fellow he was. Bending forward with one elbow on his knee, his head, as he looked up in her face, was thrown slightly back, showing its fine contour, and exposing the massive beauty of his throat. His broad shoulders, his length and strength of limb, and, above all, his complexion, with its sea-dipped look of freshness, made him a typical Englishman of the better sort. His appearance was of just the kind to make his friends proud of him, and to give a touch of exasperation to those who did not love him.

Phil Roy did not love him; and the indescribable air of superiority an Englishman contrives to wear, whether he is superior or not, made Phil feel like tweaking his nose.

Phil's own delicate brown face and slender figure were not without their attraction; but the difference

between the two men was like that between a gray-hound and a mastiff; as though the mastiff should say, "You keen, high-bred looking creature, you do admirably to ornament a lady's drawing-room; but, if there is any real man's work to be done, call on me."

Bertie was talking in her rapid, breathless way; her near-sighted eyes admiring, at the end of her nose, her hands, her rings, her ribbons. She did not see how often Phil's glance shot across the width of the room to where the others were saying, in low tones, things commonplace enough, but for the manner that accompanied them, — the peculiar manner that makes love's lightest word the height of eloquence.

"The darkies say," Bertie was saying, "'white man monstrous unsartin;' and I believe that is the sum of human experience. The only thing we can be certain about, in man, is his uncertainty. Now, there is my paragon. I thought him every thing true, lovely, and of good report. But what a fall is here, my countrymen! I shall never believe in anybody again."

"Now, there you go," said Phil; "moralizing and generalizing over the human race, because you have found out there is one more scoundrel in existence. Why, the world is full of them."

"And he looks so fresh and innocent too!"

"You know, I distrusted him the first time I saw him. A fellow that parts his hair in the middle!"

"Yes; but I thought that was prejudice. You men always detest foreigners."

"And you women always adore them."

"You see, we like novelty."

"Well, I hope you have got enough of novelty this time. How can the puppy have the impudence to look up in Homoselle's face in that manner!"

"How is he looking up in her face? You know, I can't see without my glasses. He used to look up in my face until I discouraged him."

"Oh! I dare say. But this thing can't go on. Your brother must be told."

"Frank will not believe any thing against his friends. He never does."

"What! not if you tell him what you have *seen*?"

"I am dreadfully near-sighted, you know, and once spoke to a cow for one of our neighbors; and Frank has never trusted my eyes implicitly since."

"Well, my sight is good enough, and I will speak. My suspicions have been aroused for some time, but I held my tongue until I was certain. Now I will not only inform your brother, but I will thrash *him*."

"Will that be as easy?"

"Quite."

While Bertie and Phil were talking after this fashion, Homoselle and Halsey were conversing in quite a different mood.

"That reminds me of a dream I had some time ago," Halsey said in reply to something she had been telling him.

"Did you dream of pistols?"

"Not exactly, but something akin, — muskets."

"I wish it were only a dream about my pistol. I have looked everywhere for it, and can't find it. I am sure it was in the drawer where I keep it, last week;

but I missed it day before yesterday, and have not seen it since. It is a little beauty, too, mounted in silver. My cousin George Dinwiddie gave it to me years ago, when we used to practise shooting at a mark. But I have given that up now, and I intended making you a present of the pistol."

"I hope it will turn up, I am sure. But who is George Dinwiddie? A cousin I have not heard of before. Cousins seem to grow on every bush in Virginia."

"You have forgotten. I must have often talked about George: he is the dearest fellow in the world, or was. I have not seen him for three years. He is the son of my mother's sister. She and her two boys are the only relatives I have on my mother's side. Some day you will know them, I hope."

"I hope so, indeed. Where are they now?"

"Travelling in Europe; and, by the by, I had an invitation to go with them."

"Why in the world did you not accept?"

"I could not leave papa. I am glad I did not now, and so ought you to be."

"So I am. But we should have met in Europe. Ours is manifest destiny. But has not that youngster made a pillow of your shoulder long enough? Isn't it time for him to go to bed?" Halsey asked, as the hall clock struck nine.

"To be sure it is. I had forgotten all about the child.—Skip, dear, wake up. It is nine o'clock, long past your bed-time."

"Presently," murmured Skip.

“Not a bit of it. Go right now.”

“I ain’t hearin’ what you and Mr. Horsely are talkin’ about,” said Skip, his senses not entirely submerged in drowsiness.

“Nonsense, boy!” said Homoselle, flushing, and glancing toward Phil, who caught her eye. “Don’t behave like a baby, but go at once.”

The boy, with his eyes half-shut, rose reluctantly, and staggered sleepily towards the door.

“Look out!” cried Phil and Halsey simultaneously, as he ran into a little table ornamented with an India bowl full of yellow jessamine.

“What a fuss!” said the child fretfully.

The bowl capsized, deluging him with water, and scattering the flowers over the floor. The bowl was rescued by Phil’s quickness. “You little brat, look what you are about!” he said, catching the precious china in time to save it from destruction.

Skip was thoroughly roused by his bath and Phil’s impatience. “You’d better not call me a brat: my pa says it’s not gentlemanly to call people names,” he said, stooping to pick up the flowers, glad to postpone going to bed.

“Skip, don’t be pert. You have done mischief enough for one evening,” said Homoselle.

“Now, Homo, how could I help it? You would send me to bed before I was awake.”

“In future you shall go to bed before you are asleep, sir. Look at the puddle of water on the floor, and my flowers, that I arranged so beautifully, in a mess.”

“La! Homo, there’s plenty more in the garden;

and you never used to think so much of 'em, anyway, till Mr. Horsely said they were your flowers. I don' know what he said so for, either: they are all yellor, and you ain't a yellor girl."

This was a pert child's silly speech, that another time would have been laughed at; but a flame leaped into Phil's eyes at the unexpected opportunity to have it out with Halsey.

Without a moment's reflection he hissed through his clenched teeth, —

"Perhaps Mr. Halsey would admire her more if she were."

Halsey turned on him a look of mild-eyed wonder. When he saw the set purpose in Roy's face, and it gradually dawned upon him that the words were an intentional and outrageous insult, his brows knit, and his eyes glittered, while he answered with more than his usual deliberation, —

"Your words, Mr. Roy, are insulting both to Miss Despard and myself. You must apologize to her now. With me you shall settle hereafter."

In his headlong attack Phil had not perceived that his speech was scarcely less rude to Homoselle than to Halsey. He was taken aback, but he was too wrathful to be temperate: besides, the cool, masterful way in which Halsey put him in the wrong, goaded him to fury.

"Pshaw!" he said insolently: "I never insult women, and my cousin knows I intended no disrespect to her. My words were intended solely for *you*."

"You are mistaken," said Homoselle, pale with anger. "I have no such confidence in your forbearance to women. What you have said is insulting to everybody here."

The angry words passed so quickly that some moments elapsed before the lookers-on recovered from their astonishment.

Skip, who had unwittingly played the part of spark to a mine, sat in a puddle of water, looking from one disputant to the other, with a comical expression of dismay, as though by innocently pulling a string he had brought down the world about his ears.

Homoselle had drawn near to Halsey, and laid her hand on his shoulder, intending to show that she included herself in whatever concerned him.

The simple movement was at once a defiance and a confession that astonished Phil, and for a moment silenced him.

Bertie shrank into a corner of her sofa, glad that the crisis had come, but in nervous horror of a scene; like a child who has turned the faucet, and waits, shuddering, for the shower-bath.

At the first pause Mr. Despard spoke. "Roy," he said, "you forget yourself, and violate every obligation of hospitality, when you insult one of my guests."

Phil writhed at this reproach, which he felt was so undeserved.

"Mr. Despard! Homoselle!" he cried, pointing to Halsey, "you do not know this man: he is" —

"Come, Roy, not another word. — Ellie, you and Bertie go up stairs, and take Skip with you."

“Frank !” cried Bertie in a trembling voice, intending to make a stand for Phil. But her brother would not hear.

“Not now, Bertie,” he said, holding open the door through which Homoselle and Skip had passed.

There was a note in Mr. Despard’s voice that even Bertie did not dare to disregard. He used it now ; and she hurried out of the room, her train wriggling after her with a tremulous motion imparted by the perturbation of her nerves.

“Halsey,” said Mr. Despard, when she had gone, “I am sorry this should have occurred under my roof. Not now, Roy : you had better wait until you are calmer before you make any explanations.”

“I shall not attempt to make any explanations now,” said Phil sulkily. “I regret having made a disturbance in your house, Mr. Despard ; but it was in your interest, as you will find some day.”

He took up his hat, and went away without looking at Halsey, who waited only long enough to bid his host good-night.

Before Phil was half way down the avenue, Halsey’s long step had caught up with him.

“Now, sir,” he said quietly, “you will tell me the meaning of your conduct.”

Phil wheeled round, trembling with rage, with his cane raised. Something in Halsey’s face made him drop it. This was not an affair to be settled with childish, hasty blows. “Meaning !” he cried, his words pouring out in a burning stream : “it means that you are a scoundrel ; it means that you are accepting

Major Carter's hospitality, and tampering with the loyalty of his slaves ; it means that you are associating with my cousins, the Miss Despards, as a gentleman, and at the same time paying your addresses to their negro servant Chloe." In the dim light Phil saw Halsey wince. "Now you know what it means."

The other did not reply for a moment, and Phil thought he had nothing to say. He was soon undeceived.

"You must retract the lies you have just spoken, or it will go hard with you," said Halsey in the exasperatingly cool tone of superiority that irritated Phil in his calmest moments, and which now lashed him into murderous fury.

"Lies ! by Heaven, you shall answer for your impertinence with your life," he cried, making a spring at Halsey's throat. But rage is blind ; and Halsey, who kept himself well in hand, easily eluded the mad attack.

"Not here," he said calmly. "We will not disgrace Mr. Despard's lawn with fisticuffs. This is not the time and place to settle this matter."

"Time and place !" cried Phil, "you are right : we will arrange a time and place to settle it, with your life or mine."

"So be it. You shall hear from me to-morrow," said Halsey, turning away, and striking across the greensward towards the path that led to Westover.

For all that his manner was so cool, his anger was hot enough ; and for some moments he felt a savage satisfaction in the idea of putting a quietus to Roy's

impertinence with a ball or a bodkin, or any thing that came to hand.

As he walked home under the calm starlit heavens, his irritation subsided, his blood cooled, and he acknowledged to himself that circumstances had forced him into a position that a looker-on might well misunderstand. Added to this, he comprehended, without indignation, Roy's very natural jealousy of a rival who was also a foreigner. Then the memory of a mistake he had himself made, the consequences of which caused it to appear so much more than a mistake, flashed over him; and in the starlight, with nobody to see, he felt his face burn with the ever-ready flush that he had never been able to bring under control.

In the most trying moments, when the absolute stillness of his manner testified to intense self-repression, this sudden mounting of the blood to his cheek betrayed, against his will, the passionate vitality beneath his enforced calmness.

He gave Roy the advantage of trying to view the matter from his standpoint; but still there was much in the fire-eating young Virginian's conduct that was insupportable, and richly deserved punishment.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CARD-PARTY.

THE practice of duelling was declining at this period of the world's history, and men, even in the South, were beginning to find more rational means of settling their differences than by flying to arms on the slightest provocation ; but there was no other issue possible in a quarrel like that of Roy with Halsey. Accordingly a challenge was sent by the latter through his friend and compatriot, Dobbin ; and all necessary preliminaries were satisfactorily arranged, the weapons agreed upon, the time and place of meeting appointed.

Roy did not go again to Dunmore ; and, when Halsey made his appearance there, his manner was so tranquil that nobody suspected the grave matter he had in hand.

Mr. Despard, who had feared that the angry words spoken in his drawing-room would be followed by serious consequences, was completely re-assured by the cheerfulness of Halsey's demeanor.

When Bertie was questioned as to the insinuations she and Roy had made against the young Englishman, she had nothing more definite to say, than that she believed him to be an abolitionist who was trying to incite the negroes to rebellion, and that she and Phil

had caught him in a position which was equivocal to say the very least. What the position was, she did not explain, nor did Mr. Despard ask. He pooh-poohed the idea. Bertie had found a mare's-nest, as usual. A man was to be judged by the whole tenor of his life, not by some small, unexplained circumstance ; and Halsey had shown himself a gentleman. Bertie shook her head ominously, and said time would prove.

Mr. Despard was glad to dismiss the subject from his mind. For his part, he found that if one did not worry too much over disagreeable things, they had a tendency to blow over. Besides, his thoughts were occupied at this time with an entertainment he proposed giving a distinguished man who was making a short stay in the neighborhood. The distinguished man was fond of cards ; and the entertainment was to take the form of a card-party, to be given, as it happened, on the evening before the day appointed for the duel.

While Mr. Despard's thoughts were engaged with the details of his *menu*, Halsey was preparing for death.

The evening of the card-party arrived ; and Homoselle, to whom the day had been of more than ordinary difficulty, retired to rest fatigued and anxious.

Any thing like a feast at Dunmore involved its mistress in troubles unknown to households not under the necessity of appearing more imposing than the means at command justified. The old Dunmore hospitality had been proverbial ; and Mr. Despard, who now rarely entertained, said, "When I do invite anybody to the

house, I want to have things decent." "Decent," a word which at the first glance seems to be of modest requirements, has been proved to cover a great deal of ground. Mr. Despard, like ecclesiastics who take the unpretending expression "decently and in order" to mean a great deal of sumptuous display, intended, as Homoselle knew, things not easily attainable, — delicate feathered things that fly the air, and feed on banks of celery ; things that swim the sea ; things that imprison for years the bloom and sunshine of rare vintages, to be quaffed in an hour.

Her temper had been sorely tried by the heavy expenditure she was obliged to incur in order to have things even approaching decency in her father's sense of the word. Her patience, too, had been exhausted by the servants, who seemed to be more than ordinarily blundering and forgetful on the occasion, and doubled her labors by their carelessness and inattention. Then, there was the secret, gnawing anxiety she always suffered when her father's easy temper was exposed to the invasion of the feeling called good-fellowship. He seemed only to need the contact of other men to arouse the fierce passion for social enjoyment that sometimes lay dormant so long, that she thought the serpent was killed, until occasion proved it was only scotched.

Unfortunately the great man for whose benefit the card-party was given was called away at the last moment by urgent public business ; but the entertainment, though shorn of its brightest ornament, went on all the same.

Many a long day had passed since the Dunmore walls, once so famed for hospitality, had waked up to the gayety of invited company. This fact probably, besides the tradition of good cheer, made the entertainment a success. Nobody declined ; and although the weather had been unfavorable all day, and at the time of meeting in the evening it was raining heavily, everybody who was invited came. They were not many, — a few prominent county gentlemen, several of whom had to ride a long distance, and arrived wet and mud-splashed. But when their horses had been snugly stabled, and themselves comforted with a cheery fire that remedied their dampness, and pleasant bumpers that assuaged their dryness, they enjoyed themselves the more for the contrast with the storm outside. A genial company of country gentlemen, who discussed politics, crops, and the weather, as they rubbed their hands and toasted their calves round the blaze which the dampness of the evening made agreeable although it was only September.

There were Nelsons and Pages, Byrds and Carters ; among them the usual proportion of pessimists who believed the country was going to the democrats and the dogs, and cheerful souls who thought every thing would come right in the end. There was the facetious man who told anecdotes ; the bachelor who indulged in theories about women ; the family man, rather inclined to bore you about cutting teeth and the croup ; the agriculturist, whose mind revolved with the rotation of crops ; and the inevitable man with a cold, who coughed or sneezed in the middle of your best story.

The cards were not brought out until after supper, — which, by the way, was quite up to the traditional mark, — and then the business of the evening began.

The storm raged wildly, and the rain poured in torrents without ; but the scene within was comfortable enough.

The dining-room was illuminated for the occasion with the soft light of many candles, clusters of which decked the high mantelpiece, and brightened the old sideboard garnished with heavy silver plate and a great bowl of fragrant apple-toddy. Into this mellow radiance was projected a cloud of smoke from a dozen cigars.

There were three card-tables, round which twelve gentlemen were seated, smoking and playing whist. Their countenances indicated that it was very earnest play.

Had some hapless Virginian, exposed to the tempest, peeped through the windows at the ruddy glow indoors, he would have sighed like the disconsolate Peri at the gate of Paradise. Light, warmth, liquors, cigars, cards ! What more could the heart of man desire ?

The games went on in the proverbial silence that belongs to scientific whist. Scarcely a word was spoken except the necessary explanations that arose from time to time.

The stakes, beginning with a nominal value, increased as the night went on.

Mr. Despard, who had not touched a card for months, and had begun playing for an evening's recreation, gradually warmed up to the work. The old

spirit entered into the man with sevenfold power, and he ended by playing desperately. Much money was lost and won that memorable night.

Homoselle's father had forgotten for the moment how the fair Dunmore estate had already been wasted by the gambling propensities of her ancestors ; forgotten the self-sacrifice with which she had lately paid off his most pressing debt ; forgotten the forbearance he owed the most dutiful of daughters.

He lost heavily, but did not betray by the quiver of an eyelash that the luck was going persistently against him. He sat, calm, pale, with brightly glowing eyes ; beyond this he showed no sign that he was squandering his substance for pastime. Once during the evening he rang to have the bowl replenished, but scarcely noticed that the summons was not responded to, so intent was he on his game.

Meanwhile Homoselle was lying awake, listening to the storm, and waiting for the company to depart.

She could not sleep until her father had put out the lights, and was safe in his room. She had tried to sit up, but had been forced at last to go to bed out of sheer weariness.

Several times while undressing she had gone into the hall, and peeped over the balusters into the dim, far-off regions below ; but a bright line of light under the dining-room door, and a penetrating odor of cigar-smoke, gave no indication of the company breaking up.

She was in the habit of leaving her shutters open at night for the sake of the friendly light of the stars ; but

this night was so black that her room was in utter darkness. The melancholy sighing of the wind, and the heavy dash of the rain against the windows, made the gloom more oppressive. She rose, and lighted a taper which she placed on the hearth. The tiny point of light, though only enough to make darkness visible and throw ponderous shadows, was like a companion in her lonely night-watch. As the hours wore on, her restlessness and anxiety increased. She found herself listening nervously to every sound; the scampering of rats in the wall, the creaking of furniture, and all those unaccountable noises that break the stillness of the night. Once or twice she started up, feeling sure some one was in the room. Finally she became so excited, that, when a blast of wind rattled the branches of a tree against her window, it was with difficulty she repressed a scream. The shock over, she realized the harmless nature of the disturbance, and felt a hysterical desire to laugh. She was thoroughly roused, and so nervous from tension of feeling that her senses were painfully acute.

She had waited so long for the first movement downstairs, that her heart gave a great leap when she heard what seemed to be a light footfall on the steps.

In a moment she became all ears. The step sounded far away, near the hall-door at the back of the house. But this could not be her father, coming up the back way: besides, it was an unshod foot. She sat up in bed, and listened. It came nearer. Softly, lightly up the stairway came some one, feeling the way in the darkness with a hand on the wall. It must be

one of the servants. But what could they be coming up stairs for, at this time of night?

It flashed over her, how strangely they had acted all day, — how they seemed to be in a state of suppressed excitement, one moment careless and insubordinate, the next fawning with cringing servility.

She half rose with the intention of locking the door, and then remembered, with a shiver, that the lock had been out of order and the key gone for years.

The footsteps had reached the top of the stairs now, and were in the passage, coming straight towards her door.

In a moment of danger, things forgotten crowd into the memory like the myriads of unseen motes that flash into existence with a ray of sunlight. Homoselle remembered how often Halsey had warned her of the careless security in which Southerners lived; how he had declared that he sometimes felt appalled at the danger of their position; how she had laughed at his fears, and half promised to be more careful in future. Oh! why did these thoughts come to torture her, when she most needed steadiness, with vain regret that she had never had her lock repaired?

What was this unknown terror coming upon her now; that stood at her door, with its hand upon the latch?

Human nature never deserts its post. Even in this supreme moment Homoselle was conscious of a hope, scarcely a prayer, that the danger would come in the form of flesh and blood, and not as a ghost. Like most women, she did not believe in ghosts, but she was mortally afraid of them.

By the feeble light of the taper on the hearth she saw the door open slowly, inch by inch, as if the intruder did not wish to rouse her if she were asleep. She found strength to call, in a frightened whisper that she did not recognize as her own voice, "Who's there?"

The door opened ; and a man, as well as she could see, — a strange negro man, — stood in the doorway. Her presence of mind did not desert her : indeed, it was a relief to find that it was a negro. Either from the fact of belonging to a dominant race, or from natural instinct, Southerners were never personally afraid of negroes. Homoselle found her voice.

"What do you want? Is any one ill, that you come to me at this time of night?" she asked in the ordinary tone of mistress to servant.

The tremulous voice that answered her betrayed more agitation than her own.

"Miss Ulla ! Miss Ulla !" cried Chloe in broken accents.

Homoselle peered over the intruder's head, into the darkness, to see if Chloe was behind. She did not connect her maid's voice with the masculine figure in the doorway.

"Miss Ulla ! O Miss Ulla !" came the low, despairing cry again ; and Homoselle recognized that it was indeed Chloe who stood there in jacket and trousers.

"Chloe," she said angrily, beginning to cry now, "what do you mean by dressing in that absurd manner, and frightening me out of my senses in the middle of the night? I shall have to speak to papa about you. I am scared to death."

“O Miss Ulla ! I come to tell you dat de men is all gone,” said Chloe, drawing nearer to the bed, and speaking in a frightened whisper.

“The men ! What men ? What do you mean, Chloe ? ”

“I mean de men, — field-han’s an’ house-servants, an’ all.”

“The negroes ? Gone ? Where ? ”

“I dunno, Miss Ulla ; but dey is got swords an’ guns, an’ dey is marchin’, hunderds an’ hunderds of ’em.”

Homoselle sprang out of bed. All her petty fears had been child’s play to this. She felt as if the day of doom had come.

“Light the candles, Chloe ; find my dressing-gown. Why, child, you are dripping wet ! ”

In a moment she had thrown her wrapper on, and was hastily putting on a pair of slippers, when Chloe, in a passion of grief and terror, threw herself on the floor, and began kissing her mistress’s bare white feet.

“Miss Ulla,” she sobbed, “I done all I could to save you and mars’r. Don’t tell on me.”

Homoselle raised her gently.

“No, indeed : you have been a good child, Chloe. God bless you ! ” she said, throwing her arms round the trembling girl, and kissing her cheek. “Get some dry clothes out of my wardrobe, and lie down on the sofa until I come back. I must go to my father now.”

She took a candle, and went down-stairs. She did

not pause at the dining-room, but opened the door, and went right in.

Standing there, the flickering candle in her trembling hand, her white nightdress scarcely concealed by her hastily fastened wrapper, her hair streaming over her shoulders, her face drawn and haggard, — she was a figure to dismay the stoutest heart. Something terrible must have happened to bring her there and thus.

The card-players looked up aghast. Her father raised his hand as if to ward off an impending blow.

“Good God, Ellie ! what is the matter ?” he cried, rising, and throwing down the cards that seemed so puerile now beside his daughter’s agonized countenance.

“Father — the negroes !”

“The negroes !” echoed every voice, as every man started to his feet, “the negroes ! What of them ?”

“They are all in arms. Chloe says they are rising all over the country, and every man on the plantation is gone.”

The men looked at each other. There was a world of terrible meaning in that silent interchange of glances.

“It has come at last,” cried one, throwing his cigar into the fireplace, and buttoning up his coat.

“Our wives and children,” groaned another through his clenched teeth.

Mr. Despard recovered himself in a moment.

“Go to bed, Ellie darling,” he said : “we will see to this affair. I am sure it must be greatly exaggerated. Gentlemen, you must look after your horses ; and I will

get together all the arms in the house so as to be prepared for any emergency. — Come, Ellie, go to bed.”

His calmness somewhat re-assured Homoselle, who went back to her room.

The lights were burning there still, but Chloe was gone.

“Where can the poor child have gone in such weather?” she thought, ringing the bell. Then she took her candle, and went to Bertie’s room, and afterwards to Skip’s, to see if they were safe. She found them both sleeping peacefully, and did not disturb them. She decided not to go back to her own apartment. After locking and bolting the doors in Skip’s room, she lay down on a sofa, determined to wait for morning, and to keep a lookout for Chloe, whom she intended to bring in and keep with her until the end — whatever that might be. She understood now the danger that threatened the girl from her own people. They would naturally look upon her as a traitor, but henceforth Homoselle and her father would have to regard her as their best friend.

Homoselle reckoned without her host when she resolved to keep watch until morning. Her faculties had been thoroughly exhausted by the long-continued strain of emotion; and, while she was making up her mind to keep awake, her body succumbed, and she fell fast asleep.

She would have said it was impossible to sleep under such circumstances; but the facts of the case were against her, as she discovered when she awoke.

Mr. Despard and his friends, as soon as Homoselle left them, turned their attention to making such preparations as they could for meeting the danger that threatened them.

Each man's anxiety was, of course, for the safety of his own family, and his first impulse to get home as fast as possible, to be at his post, and die, if need be, in defence of those dearest to him.

While Mr. Despard went to collect the fire-arms, of which there were a goodly number, of one kind or another, about the house,—enough, he thought, to furnish a pistol or a shotgun to each of his guests,—these latter went out to look after their horses. It was a tempestuous night, still raining heavily, and so dark it was with difficulty they groped their way to the stables.

They were not gone long. After a few moments they came back, rushing pell-mell into the house with white, stony faces.

“Good God, Despard!” cried one, “the infernal scoundrels have taken all the horses.”

Mr. Despard's face was as pale and rigid as theirs as he answered, “And all the arms.”

“By the Eternal,” groaned the other, “we are caught like rats in a trap!”

CHAPTER XXII.

SUSPICION.

MR. DESPARD and his guests looked blankly into each other's faces, overcome with the horror and hopelessness of their position.

The sublimest courage could have availed nothing in their case. They were as helpless as the blind, shorn Samson in the hands of his enemies.

The guests went forth into the stormy night, defenceless and on foot, to return to their distant homes, careless of the perils by the way, but agonized with the thought of what they might find when they got back to their wives and children. More than one mind became unsettled in the contemplation of what might have happened : a pang was added to their worst forebodings, as each man, in the depths of his heart, tried to realize how he had used power when he possessed it, and what he had a right to expect now that it had passed into other hands.

When Homoselle woke, it was broad daylight : the storm had passed away, and the sun was shining brightly. The first object that met her eyes was Skip, sitting on the side of his bed, half dressed, his unkempt hair hanging about his eyes, his face puckered up with childish discontent. "Homo!" he cried, as

soon as he found that she was awake, "I wish you would scold Chloe. I have been ringin' and ringin' the bell, and she won't come. How can I comb my hair and put on my shoes by myself?"

Her maid's name recalled to Homoselle all that had happened the night before. "Chloe!" she said, pressing her hands to her temples, trying to realize that it had not been a horrid dream. "Chloe! Has she not come yet?"

"No; and she ain't brought the water eïther, and I can't wash."

"Don't fret. I will see what I can do about the water. But, Skip, you must learn to wait on yourself."

"Humph! I don't see what niggers are made for," replied the boy, swinging his bare legs, and helplessly contemplating his shoes and stockings.

"I wonder if I shall have to get breakfast," thought Homoselle, going in search of water.

To her surprise, she met fat old Cinthy, toiling up the stairs, with a great bucket in either hand.

"O Cinthy! is that you? Where's Chloe?"

"'Deed, Miss Ulla, I dunno. I ain't seen her sence yistiddy when she an' dat Mr. Halsey, whar stays at de major's, was a-talkin' together down at the stile."

"Why, she was here last night, quite late."

"Well, she ain't on de place dis mornin'; an' de major's Nafan come over jes' now, to know ef Mr. Halsey was here. He ain't been home sence yistiddy, an' de major's oneasy. 'Pears like bofe is gone off."

"Not been home since yesterday?" gasped Homoselle, her mind reverting at once to Phil's antagonism, and wondering if any new difficulty had arisen.

"I tole dat yaller imp not to have so much to do wid white folks," said Cinthy, her thoughts taking another direction. "Now she's done gone away, an' lef' me to do her work," she continued, grumbling as she waddled along with her buckets. "Here I'se got to fotch water from de spring at my time o' life."

"Cinthy, have the men *all* gone?" whispered Homoselle, scarcely knowing which of her accumulating troubles to attack first.

"Ebery one, Miss Ulla : de mo' fools dey."

"And what are you going to do, Cinthy?"

"Do jes' like I always been doin', Miss Ulla : I ain't nebber gwine to git no better home dan Dunmo', in *dis* worl' ; an' I gwine to stay wid you an' Mars' Frank."

Here, at least, was a loyal soul ; and the knowledge was a gleam of comfort amid Homoselle's thick-coming sorrows.

"What about papa's breakfast, Cinthy?"

"La ! honey, I done got de breakfas' ; an' me an' Tommy gwine to wait on de table. De res' ob de women-folks sort o' crazy-like to-day, an' I can't git 'em to do nothin'. But don't you fret, chile : jes' go on doin' like you always does. I'll 'tend to things."

Very little breakfast was eaten that day, although the family went through the form without any apparent agitation. They had evidently no idea of changing their ordinary habits. The groups of whispering women who hung around the house, waiting for something to happen, saw no signs of flinching in Mr. Despard or the young ladies. They gave orders, and sent

idlers about their business, in the old authoritative way. If the white people were ever to change places with the negroes, the time had not yet come. Tommy, who thought surely he was going to become a white boy and Skip a black one, watched in vain for any alteration in his young master's complexion.

Skip had his own reasons for being in a good humor. This was the day appointed for him to go home ; but the turn affairs had taken seemed to have postponed his departure indefinitely, and he kicked up his heels in great glee.

When he discovered what a solemn stillness had fallen on the house in consequence of the absence of "a few niggers," he began to doubt whether his reprieve was such a boon, after all.

It was a time of terrible anxiety. As the weary hours wore on, bringing no change, the suspense became intolerable.

The first break that occurred was the arrival of Phil, the elegant Phil, caracoling, against his will, on a scrubby little donkey, — a circumstance which, under other auspices, would have been amusing enough, but which now was only another indication of what a clean sweep the negroes had made of the horses.

It was a great relief to see somebody. Mr. Despard eagerly questioned the new-comer as to what he knew about the rising. Phil knew very little, but he had discovered this much : that it was the first object of the insurgents to seize the capital of the State, and that they had marched in force, the evening before, on Richmond, with the intention of surprising the town

with a midnight attack, which would find the inhabitants wholly unprepared and defenceless. It could not be denied that their plans had been conceived and carried out with remarkable prudence. It remained now to be seen how far they had been successful. Unfortunately, news could not possibly reach Dunmore before evening. Meanwhile, the whole country was awake. The whites everywhere were preparing to destroy the negro army, and, if need be, to exterminate the race.

One great obstacle to the organization of an impromptu army everywhere presented itself in the scarcity of arms and horses. It was this matter that had brought Phil to Dunmore. Was a horse or a gun to be had on the plantation?

Mr. Despard was obliged to confess that in this respect he had fared no better than his neighbors. Even Homoselle's toy-pistol had been taken, and not a mule was left in the pasture.

"It is strange," cried Phil excitedly, "that the major is the only man who has not suffered in this way. Very few of his negroes have left, and the only horse that has been stolen is the fine hunter that damned Englishman rides. He and the horse have both disappeared!"

"He and the horse?" echoed Mr. Despard, dumb-founded.

"Yes, he and the horse," cried Phil, his dark eyes burning with revengeful triumph. "And now, Mr. Despard, I hope you will be able to understand my contempt and hatred of that fellow. My worst suspicions

have proved well-founded. After what has happened, nothing would have brought me to your house again, notwithstanding the troubles that threaten us, had I not been in a position to show you that he is not only a scoundrel, but an arrant coward. This very day, we were to have met to settle our differences in a duel ; and he failed to keep the appointment. My friend and I were on the ground an hour, and he did not come. After a while his second, another infernal Englishman named Dobbin, made his appearance with a lame excuse. 'An accident must have occurred. Mr. Halsey had not been home since yesterday. Major Carter was very uneasy about him.' It turns out that he has fled the country, and he did not go alone ! He has run off at least one slave, and has been the chief instigator of this insurrection. It is conceded on all sides that a white man has been concerned in it, and Halsey is the man. The negroes by themselves could never have carried out their plans so successfully."

Phil paused for breath. Mr. Despard said nothing. He sat nursing his leg, cowering under a storm he had believed would blow over. The quarrel between Halsey and Phil, so far from being amicably adjusted, was a quarrel to the death ; the man whom his daughter loved had proved a coward ; his slaves, whom he had believed too contented and too timid to strike for freedom, were in open rebellion.

Worse was yet to come.

Phil gathered himself up, and went on with redoubled heat : "And with whom, think you, has he

gone off, — this friend of yours, against whom I have been so unjustly prejudiced; this suitor of your daughter's, for whom I have been scorned?"

Mr. Despard started, his strained eyes bent on Phil's angry face, striving to read what was coming. Without a suspicion of the truth, he was seized with a premonition of something terrible. In a crisis like this, the mind seems endued with supernatural powers. Mr. Despard's whole life passed before his eyes in a flash of light, that revealed all its dark secrets and forgotten sins.

The blow fell, striking through the joints of his armor, and piercing the only vulnerable spot in his heart.

"Whom, but your slave Chloe?"

Mr. Despard covered his face with his hands. Retribution had come through his innocent daughter.

"For God's sake, Roy, don't tell Homoselle," he murmured huskily.

Phil in his wrath was frightened at the effect of his words. He had never seen a countenance express such anguish as that which Mr. Despard instinctively strove to hide.

"Don't let Homoselle know," he repeated more calmly, when he had, in a measure, regained the mastery of his face and voice.

Unhappily the father's precaution was in vain. Homoselle had heard every thing.

She and Bertie, who were passing the morning in fearful suspense, had rushed down stairs, with the first sound of voices, to learn if there were any news. The

drawing-room doors were open, and Phil was speaking in his usual voice of public affairs, in which every thing that made life dear to them was involved.

They stopped to listen, without going into the room, from sheer eagerness to hear every thing as quickly as possible ; and their entrance might have made an interruption.

Phil's denunciation of Halsey occupied only a moment. There was no time to go away, had Homoselle wished it ; but her lover's name riveted her to the spot. She turned and looked beseechingly, like a stricken creature, into her aunt's face for comfort ; and Bertie answered the dumb appeal by lowering her eyes. Then Homoselle went into the room, and walked straight up to her father. There was no faltering in her step, or in the clear, low tones of her voice.

"Father," she said, using the unfamiliar but tenderer term as a caress, which went straight to his heart,—"father, do not be troubled. What you have heard is not true."

She spoke so confidently, so calmly, that Mr. Despard drew a long sigh of relief.

"You know where Halsey is, then, my daughter."

"No, papa, I do not, except that I am quite sure he is where he ought to be."

"But you know where Chloe is?" he asked eagerly.

The remembrance of what Cinthy had said about the two having been last seen together, flashed over her ; but she put aside scornfully the thought it suggested

"No," she answered frankly, "I do not even know that. But," she added, her voice unconsciously assuming a fuller, deeper tone, as though she were making a profession of faith, "I do know that Mr. Halsey is a good man, and good men do not commit base actions."

She placed her arm about her father's shoulder in saying this, as if to include him in her simple trust.

Her father groaned aloud.

"But, Homoselle," said Phil humbly, awed by her white face and solemn manner. She turned her head away.

"Bertie, you speak to her; tell her what we saw," cried the young man to Bertie, who had followed Homoselle into the room. "God knows I do not want to break her heart, only to save her."

"The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel," murmured Homoselle, turning to her aunt to hear what she had to say.

"Yes, Homoselle," faltered Bertie, her words, for once, coming brokenly and slowly for very pity, — "yes, on our way home one evening, in the twilight, Phil and I met Mr. Halsey — with his arm round Chloe; and we heard him call her — darling."

Homoselle's white face grew whiter still when she heard this. She closed her eyes with sudden pain, and there was a catch in her voice, but her low-spoken words gave no uncertain meaning. "I still trust in him," she said; then, burying her face in her father's shoulder, she whispered, "Send them away, papa. I am very tired."

Phil mounted his hard-mouthed, uncomfortable steed, and went farther in quest of arms and horses.

As he wended his way along the familiar but now deserted roads, he carried the memory of Homoselle's suffering face with him. He felt almost as if he had been standing on holy ground. The sabbath-like stillness that had fallen on the busy country life lent itself to his fancy.

"Who would have thought a mere girl capable of such unflinching devotion?" he thought, with a sigh of regret for what he had missed. "How she bears her world-battered father up, on her brave young spirit! How she believes in him, and in that brute! Such faith in a man ought to help to make his life sublime. But Despard and Halsey, those two, what are they?" Phil shrugged his shoulders. "No better than the rest of the world."

Then his thoughts went back to the all-absorbing negro troubles. "But all is not lost," he concluded, burying his spurs into his unruly beast, "when of such stuff our women are made."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CAPTURE.

“THE fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” These words kept repeating themselves in Mr. Despard’s mind until he thought he should go mad. “The fool hath said in his heart — the fool hath said,” and the treadmill began again.

What was the meaning of this? The words had been the burden of a good sermon delivered the Sunday before, by Mr. Berkeley, the young rector; but sermons and texts had never before possessed this burr-like tenacity. Their result had hitherto been a tickling of the intellect, or, at most, a momentary quickening of the pulse.

Why did this particular text come to torment him now? It was that an event had quickly followed to emphasize the import of the Psalmist’s words.

“What man,” Mr. Berkeley had said, “sitting desolate beside broken idols, does not acknowledge that he has been a fool?”

“What man, who, when he comes to pay to the uttermost farthing the debt of broken moral obligations, does not feel that there is a God?”

Mr. Despard knew that his deeds had been weighed in an unerring scale. Omniscience alone could have

so evenly adjusted the rewards of a wasted life. The sword of his punishment had pierced the very joints of his armor. "A flaming sword which turned every way" had destroyed not only his own peace, but Homoselle's happiness, while it left him powerless to cast a stone. Who was he to sit in judgment against Halsey? Had he been so careful of his daughter's welfare that he could curse the man who had deceived her?

Mr. Despard was in his office, alone with his thoughts. By tacit consent he and Homoselle had kept apart since Phil's revelations. She shrank from adding to her father's grief by a sight of her own; and he did not dare to look upon her suffering, for which he had no comfort. His thoughts were gloomy enough. Every thing that made life endurable had been swept from beneath his feet. The Nemesis that had been silently tracking his steps had suddenly drawn aside her veil, and from its dusky folds shone forth his daughter's pale face and tear-clouded eyes.

Another day had dawned, bringing no change in the aspect of affairs. Nothing had yet been heard from the insurgents. There was still nothing to be done, but to wait.

In addition to the present troubles, the day was one of sad retrospection to Mr. Despard, a day always set apart as a memorial of his wife. It was the twentieth anniversary of her death. Young, beautiful, and beloved, she had passed away, leaving a void in her husband's heart that had never been filled. But there was no need to mark this especial day with signs of mourn-

ing. Fate seemed, to him, to have hung a pall over the world.

He was roused from his bitter meditations by a scampering, yelping, barking commotion outside. In a moment Skip, followed by Dash and the Baby, burst, pale and breathless, into the room. "Uncle," he cried, "soldiers!"

"Soldiers!" echoed Mr. Despard, starting to his feet, hearing, as he spoke, the clatter of horses' hoofs on the road.

"Thank God, a change has come at last!" he thought, hurrying out to meet the men galloping in hot haste to his door, not knowing if they were friends or foes.

They proved to be half a dozen variously armed and accoutred white men, part of a hastily improvised police-force, who were scouring the country. Eager questioning followed on both sides.

"Is Michael Dray here?" asked the foremost of the horsemen, without the preamble of a salutation.

"For God's sake, my friends, what tidings have you?" asked Mr. Despard at the same time.

The soldier stooped to stroke his quivering horse as he answered hurriedly, "Better than might be expected, I can tell you. The negro army has been captured without a blow on either side. The rank and file have been disarmed, and sent home on promise of good behavior. The leaders have all been lodged in jail except one, the worst of the lot. Michael Dray escaped. We were told that he had been tracked to this farm. Do you know any thing about him?"

“Nothing whatever. But he may be skulking somewhere about here. There are the woods, the barns and other out-houses : we will make a search,” said Mr. Despard, going for his hat, glad to be doing something at last.

By this time Bertie, Homoselle, Skip, and a group of women-servants had gathered on the porch to hear the news. So intense was the relief afforded by the man’s information, that Bertie and Homoselle threw themselves, weeping, into each other’s arms, crying, “Thank God ! thank God !” A horrid nightmare seemed to have melted away in the light of the morning sun. Skip caught the glad infection, and turned cart-wheels over the grass, to the tumultuous delight of the dogs. The negro women stole silently away.

Mr. Despard received the news more soberly than the girls. The present relief was indeed great, but the trouble was by no means ended. A black, yawning chasm seemed to have opened at their feet, revealing the dangers to which they were hourly exposed.

An army of discontented slaves had been let loose upon the community. The negroes had been disarmed, but they were not reconciled. The flame had been smothered, not extinguished.

The little company of soldiers divided their force without further parley ; some to search the woods, the others, including the captain whom they called Hardy, to go with Mr. Despard through every hiding-place the farm-buildings afforded.

Mr. Despard was not long in eliciting from his com-

panions, who were as eager to tell as he was to hear, all that was to be told about the insurrection. The negroes had assembled in force, before Richmond, on the memorable night, along the banks of a little stream known as Bacon's Quarter Branch. This stream, ordinarily so insignificant that a man might leap across, had been so swollen by the recent rains as to have assumed the proportions of a formidable river between the insurgents and the point of their intended attack. This unprecedented occurrence had not entered into their calculations, and no provision had been made against it. Had it not been for the apparently trifling circumstance of the rising of the stream, Richmond would have been the scene of a massacre as terrible as any that history has yet recorded. A thousand armed slaves let loose upon a sleeping city, defended only by a small, inefficient police ! The men grew eloquent, and Mr. Despard shuddered over the recital of the horrors from which the town had been providentially delivered. Gabriel, the leader of the insurrection, they said, was undoubtedly a brave man, with some of the qualities of a general ; but he was also a religious fanatic. When he saw how the tiny stream had, in the space of twenty-four hours, become a swift-rushing river, he declared that a miracle had been wrought by the Lord, to show his people that he was against them in this effort to surprise Richmond. He exhorted his followers to disperse, and return peaceably to their homes. The Lord, in his own good time, would raise up another leader to win for them their freedom. But Gabriel found that it was more easy

to create an army than to dissolve it. His soldiers became clamorous, and insisted on ravaging the surrounding country. Balked in one enterprise, there was no reason why they should not reap some of the advantages of their position, some compensation for months of severe discipline and training. Gabriel had raised a storm he could not quell. This much had been gathered from himself after his arrest.

"But how did it happen that the authorities at Richmond discovered the plot in time to capture the army?"

"I hardly know," said Hardy. "There is a mystery about it, and a great many absurd rumors. There was an informant, certainly. Somebody swam the stream that night, and roused the town. Some say it was a young negro, very much attached to his master, whose heart failed him at the last moment; others go so far as to say that it was a negro girl; others, again, that it was a white man who had gotten wind of the affair. I suppose we shall know the truth some day. Just now they seem to think it necessary to keep it a secret, for fear the negroes may seek for vengeance on their betrayer."

While Mr. Despard was drinking in all his companions had to tell, they had not been idle. Every conceivable place was being searched for Michael. Barns, cabins, stables, lofts, cellars, were overhauled without result.

The party on horseback, after a day's beating of the woods, returned with no better luck. It was decided, that, after taking some refreshment, they

should leave Dunmore, and search farther on for the culprit; but a circumstance occurred which decided them to remain.

While they were at supper early in the evening, Skip, who had been playing near the house with his dogs, came in about twilight in a highly excited state. Going to Homoselle, who was in the drawing-room alone, he buried his face in her bosom, trembling violently. She stroked his head gently, thinking it only natural that his nerves should be unstrung by the tension to which they had been subjected for two days.

"Homo," he whispered, after a while, "I am scared."

"Scared, dear? what about?"

"Michael," he said, dropping his voice so as to be almost inaudible.

With a great effort Homoselle controlled herself to speak naturally, —

"Michael! What of him?"

"I saw his red eyes shinin' at me."

"Where, Skip? Where?"

"In the wood-pile."

"Are you sure? I am certain the men searched there this morning."

"Yes, Homo, sure. The Baby found him. He kept scratchin' and scratchin' at the wood-pile, an' I thought he had found a rat; an' I went up to the wood, an' saw — oh!"

As soon as it was made known what Skip had seen, or thought he had seen, the great wood-pile, kept constantly replenished behind the kitchen, was attacked. There was discovered, not Michael, but a

hollow, quite large enough to hold a man, in what, from the outside, seemed to be a compact mass of fire-logs. This part of the pile had been partially thrown down, and the cook was busily getting an armful of wood for her kitchen-fire. On being questioned she sullenly answered, "Dat she didn't know nothin' 'bout de hole in de wood, 'cep' dat de dogs went dar sometimes."

It was possible that Skip had been mistaken, but the affair was suspicious. Capt. Hardy and his men began anew the search, with the same result as before. Not a trace of Michael was found. After some discussion, the soldiers concluded to remain all night, greatly to the relief of Bertie, who thought if Michael were indeed skulking in the neighborhood, she would sleep much better with a strong guard in the house.

The deep, untroubled rest that follows the removal of pressing anxiety had fallen on the household. Even the soldiers, wearied with a night and day in the saddle, were sleeping heavily, when the clangor of a great bell roused everybody trembling to their feet. What new horror had fallen now? Whence these strange, brazen tones, never heard before?

To Mr. Despard alone they were familiar. He knew that the few short strokes proceeded from the great farm-bell that hung in the belfry adjoining the kitchen. Twenty years before, it had been silenced at the request of his dying wife. He remembered, with a pang, that this was the anniversary of her death. Who dared to ring the bell now? In the first surprise of startled sleep it seemed a horror bordering on the

supernatural. Fully awake, he thought of Michael, and the long-disused, ivy-covered belfry that had escaped notice in the morning's search. Not a moment was lost in acting on this idea. He, with Hardy and his companions, who had not laid aside their clothing, dashed out of the house, and got to the kitchen in time to seize a negro, who was cowering under the steps in the vain hope of not being discovered. Dragged out into the light of the stars, it proved to be indeed Michael, who had not sufficiently recovered from the terror and confusion caused by his accidentally ringing the bell, to make an effort to escape. Brought to bay by his pursuers, he was not long in regaining his courage.

"Come on, you damned cowards!" he cried, striking out furiously, felling two of his opponents, and proceeding to throttle a third with one hand, while he pounded right and left with the other.

"Come on, I say! It will take a dozen of you to make me a prisoner. Strike fair, you scoundrels! Come jest two at a time, and I'll send every man of you to hell in no time!"

In addition to his enormous strength, Michael had great suppleness and activity, and seemed to possess a whole armory of natural weapons, inflicting wounds not only with his ponderous fists, but with his head, teeth, and feet besides.

Long and fearful was the life and death struggle.

"Will somebody fetch a gun?" cried Hardy, blinded by a blow between the eyes: "if not, this devil will escape."

Michael howled with rage and despair. The valiant fight he was making against superior numbers would avail nothing against fire-arms.

One of the men dashed into the house to get the weapons, that had been left behind in the scramble to discover who had rung the bell.

Seeing this, Michael, with one last, mighty effort, sprang, like some splendid animal, from among his captors, and was fleeing for his life, when he was brought to the ground by a rifle-shot.

He did not speak, or even groan, after this. Proudly and sullenly he allowed himself to be manacled, and led back to the house.

His wound, which was in the leg, though sufficient to arrest his flight, was thought, on examination, not to be dangerous. When it had been attended to as well as existing circumstances admitted, he was taken and lodged in the county jail.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MAJOR.

THERE was a lull in public affairs. The insurrection had been crushed; the slaves were returning to work more docile than ever; the ringleaders were in prison awaiting trial; and the country was beginning to breathe freely again. Only the white man Johnson was at large, and it was supposed that he had left the State and made his way home.

Even the Dunmore household, after the excitement of Michael's capture the night before, had recovered something of its tranquillity, and had begun insensibly to take up the old life again, — the old life which for a brief period had seemed threatened with destruction.

Homoselle's private griefs were as poignant as ever. Another day had passed, and nothing had been heard of Halsey or Chloe. It was an aggravation of her distress, that her father did not sympathize with her, at least in the way she wanted him to do.

He was miserable enough over her misery, but he could not be led to believe that Halsey was innocent. In her father's eyes he had been found guilty of the two worst offences it was possible for a man to commit. Either would have wholly condemned him in

Mr. Despard's estimation ; but both together made the young man infamous indeed. In the first place he had run off a slave, in the second he had failed to keep an engagement to fight. Could a man have a blacker record? These things made it easy to believe the worst that had been said of Halsey's motives in aiding Chloe to escape.

The subject was not mentioned between them, and Homoselle knew from that very fact what was her father's opinion.

Bertie had been greatly sobered by recent events, and the better side of her nature showed itself in more tenderness for Homoselle than she had ever before manifested. But neither did her sympathy go to the extent of believing that Halsey was innocent, and would soon come back to give the lie to all the injurious things that had been said about him. Sympathy less than this, Homoselle did not care to have.

Bertie was sorry, very sorry ; but the truth was, she had always had misgivings about Halsey. She was not altogether surprised at his developing low tastes. The first time she met him, she discovered that he was not an Englishman of the better sort. He had owned to her that he did not know a single duke or duchess in his own country.

"I wonder what the major thinks of his paragon now?" Homoselle overheard Bertie ask Mr. Despard. She did not wait to hear the answer. A new thought struck her. She would go and see the major. He would not doubt Halsey's truth ; and he might be able to give her some information, at least some comfort.

Full of this plan, Homoselle instinctively, and almost unconsciously, began to make some changes in her dress. A woman's first weapon, in an attempt to disarm fate itself, is to look her best. Homoselle soon forgot what manner of face she had seen in the glass, in her trepidation at the boldness of the step she was about to take. Major Carter had, for many years, been a sort of recluse, and was so shy with women that it required a good deal of courage to make him a visit. But the end in view was worth an effort: she went without giving herself time to think, and the walk through the stillness of Deep Run wood calmed her excitement. When she reached Westover her timid knock at the front door was not heard; but a servant, who had been watching her approach from behind the shutters of his pantry-window, responded so promptly as to startle her. But she was re-assured by his manner. If he felt any surprise at the unusual sight of a young-lady visitor, he was far too polite to show it. His broad smile and profound bow expressed only the most generous welcome. Homoselle was greatly encouraged. First impressions are of such moment, and servants are so apt to reflect the temper of the head of the house, that she felt sure the major would not be less affable than his butler.

"Walk in, walk in, my young missus," said Solon graciously, "walk right into de dinin'-room. De major is dar jest done smokin' his fust pipe, an' is waitin' to receive company." Knowing the major's secluded habits, the sad-hearted girl could not help smiling at Solon's polite invention.

She was ushered into the dining-room, the scene of Capt. Cook's adventures, the hero who had been sailing around the walls for sixty years or more.

The major was sitting in his accustomed easy-chair near the window; his head thrown back, his eyes turned upward to the ceiling; his arms extended along the arms of his chair, which he was gently tapping with his fingers.

Homoselle was pained to see how ill and feeble he looked. He was plunged in so deep a revery that she hesitated to advance.

Solon's cordial announcement roused his master from his musing.

"Here is one of de Miss Despard's come to see you, major," he said in a cheery voice with a tone of protecting affection, like a mother speaking to a child.

A faint flush, like the delicate color of a faded rose, tinged the major's pale, worn cheek, when he saw Homoselle.

"This is kind," he said rising, and trying to hide with what difficulty he did so. "My dear young lady, this is kind to come and see a lonely old man."

Homoselle's eyes drooped guiltily: "It was not only" — she stammered.

The major's gray moustache curled, and his eyes gleamed, with a dash of the quiet fun which was his nearest approach to merriment.

"Take a seat, my dear," he said, drawing up a chair, and then sinking back exhausted in his own.

"Solon, you can go now, and shut the door. It is a little chilly. So it is not only the old man?" he asked,

finishing Homoselle's sentence for her when Solon was gone.

"No," she said frankly, but bashfully: "I came to ask about Mr. Halsey."

"I knew it, my child, as soon as I saw you," he said while his countenance fell. "I wish I could tell you something about him. I am fully as anxious as you can be. The times are so unsettled, and he is so rash, I have been afraid of his getting into some difficulty with the negroes,—especially since he rode a very fine horse when he went away, and the black idiots seemed to be crazy about horses. I think every man of them wanted to be in the cavalry. Two legs are well enough to go into a fight, but if the luck turns against you four are better to get out with."

He spoke very gently, even playfully, concealing his worst fears, so as not to alarm her unnecessarily.

To his surprise, her face brightened.

"Do you fear nothing worse?" she asked in an unmistakable tone of relief.

"Worse?" cried the major, with a startled look of inquiry, fearing she had heard something worse than his surmises.

The tears brimmed over in Homoselle's eyes. She was touched to the quick by his utter want of suspicion that worse than bodily danger could befall Halsey.

"Do you not know?" she said with trembling lips.

The major straightened himself in his chair to listen, while Homoselle, with tears and blushes, told him of the crimes of which her lover had been accused.

An angry fire leaped into her listener's eyes; his

face reddened ; one would not have thought the old man had so much blood in him ; his moustache bristled.

"It's all a damned lie !" he thundered, bringing his fist down with a thump that made Homoselle start.

Never had cooing dove a sweeter note to her ears than this slightly profane profession of faith.

"I am sure of it," she said warmly.

The major leaned back to rest. The vigor of youth returns only in flashes that waste while they warm.

With closed eyes he reviewed the ground over which Homoselle had gone ; and he remembered, with a shade of annoyance, not only the conversation he had had with Halsey, in which the latter had expressed his deep commiseration for this girl Chloe, but a drawing the young fellow had made of her beautiful face.

He opened his eyes, and found Homoselle intently watching the changes of his countenance. He felt almost as if she had been reading his thoughts.

"You say nothing has been heard of the girl?" he asked in a feeble voice, for he had not yet recovered from the effect of his excitement.

"Nothing."

"And that Halsey was last seen with her?"

"So Cinthy told me."

"And that Phil and Bertie had previously seen them together?"

"Yes," in a scarcely audible voice.

The major closed his eyes, and pondered again.

"It is very strange," he said at last. "The truth is, my child, the external facts of the affair seem to go against Halsey. You must not be too hard on Phil

for making a strong case of it. I have no doubt that there is a little jealousy in the matter too. But you and I, who know what a clean-hearted fellow Halsey is, know, too, that it would be impossible for him to betray you and me and every principle of honor."

"Bless you for that!" she cried with flushed cheeks and dewy eyes, looking so beautiful in her trouble, that the major fairly blinked. Was this the girl he had thought cold and uninteresting?

"But, major, what *can* have become of him?" persisted Homoselle, unconscious of his admiration.

"My fear is, that he has got into some trouble about that horse. A band of foraging negroes may have taken it away from him, and he may not have been able to make his way home since. To be sure, this is the third day. All I can do, my child, is to preach to you patience."

"O major, if you knew, if you only knew, how hard that lesson is!"

"If I knew!" said the major. His tone and glance filled her with compunction.

"Forgive me," she cried penitently, venturing timidly to lay her hand on his; "in my selfishness I forgot that every heart has its own sorrows. I was ungrateful, too, for I came to you for comfort; and you have given me so much, oh, so much!"

"Then I count this day not lost," he said, raising her fingers to his lips with tender courtesy. "I must thank you, too, for the happiness you have given me. The very sight of your young face has done me good, and it is a pleasure to talk of the lad with some one who loves him."

"You will let me know if you get tidings?"

"Yes; and you must do the same for me."

"Good-by," said Homoselle rising, yet lingering wistfully: the old man looked so feeble to be left alone.

"Can I do any thing for you, major?"

"Yes, — come again."

"I will, indeed. Good-by once more."

"Good-by, and God bless you!"

She left the room with his blessing ringing softly in her ears. "Come again," he had said. She little dreamed how and when she would come again.

In the hall she met Solon, who was waiting to see her out.

He was a large, important-looking personage, who had so sincere an admiration for his master as to cultivate a ferocious moustache and side-whiskers, and, if his fellow-servants were to be believed, to shave the top of his head in order to have a bald spot like the major's.

Certain it is, that he affected military brevity in his orders to underlings, and immense deference for the fair sex.

"I'se proud to see you at Westover, my young missis," he said with a deep reverence, holding the door open as Homoselle passed out. "I'se thankful you is been to see de major: he is mighty lonesome sence Mr. Halsey went away. Don't you think he looks po'ly, ma'am?" he asked, his anxiety peeping through his grand air.

"Yes," said Homoselle, "I am afraid he is very ill. Take care of him, Solon. I will come again."

“God bless you for dat, my young missis !” ejaculated the faithful servant fervently.

“Two blessings in one day !” thought Homoselle, wending her way homeward : “surely they ought to bring me happiness.”

CHAPTER XXV.

CHLOE.

ALTHOUGH Homoselle returned home no wiser, in regard to Halsey's movements, than when she went to Westover, she was greatly encouraged and strengthened by the major's unwavering faith in the young man. She even blamed herself for disloyalty to her lover in being made unhappy by the charges brought against him. Her only solicitude should have been for his personal safety. At any rate, that was her only anxiety about him now ; and it was bad enough.

When she got home she found Skip's dog, the Baby, scampering over the hall-floor with some plaything that seemed to afford him more than usual delight. The Baby had developed into an exceedingly mischievous puppy, who was being constantly threatened with banishment. Books, shoes, and gloves suffered from his predatory habits. Nothing gnawable was safe from his sharp white teeth ; and to lookers-on it seemed that the greater the mischief, the more keen the enjoyment. One's best shoes gave him more pleasure than the door-mat.

Homoselle found him in wild play, jumping from side to side with a white ball, getting himself entangled in yards upon yards of yarn, wreaking destruction upon

a piece of knitting. She stooped to rescue the work, and recognized with a pang Chloe's unfinished stocking.

Where was the child now?

In the terror and distress of the last few days, Chloe's danger had not pressed home to Homoselle as vividly as the horrors of a servile insurrection ; but the girl had not been forgotten. Diligent search and inquiry had been made for her, and at last a reward was offered for information concerning her.

Phil's accusations had inevitably given a certain bitterness to the thought of Chloe, although Homoselle told herself that she had never for a moment believed them. Besides, it would be impossible to forget the girl's courage and devotion in following up the progress of the insurrection in order to try to save her master's household.

Holding in her hand the unfinished stocking over which Chloe had so often nodded, half asleep, while the work dragged its slow length along, Homoselle was irresistibly reminded of the last time she had seen her, and all the details of that terrible night. The storm ; the flickering candle ; the stealthy step on the stair ; Chloe, drenched with rain, her strange costume, her tears and passionate caresses, — could Homoselle ever forget them? Could she ever be sufficiently affectionate and grateful to her little maid?

Troubled with misgivings in regard to the safety of both Halsey and Chloe, she found it impossible to sit with folded hands, and think. She set herself vigorously to work at the first occupation that presented

itself. It happened to be the packing of Skip's trunk. He was really going home the next day, if another rebellion or convulsion of nature did not intervene.

Homoselle busied herself in putting up the piles of neatly washed and mended clothes, that Cinthy had brought in from the laundry several days before, but which had been overlooked in the excitement that followed, — clothes in which Skip's knees and elbows, and the Baby's teeth, had wrought sad havoc, and where patches played as important a part as the original material.

Skip himself became interested in the preparations that were making for his departure. He took a melancholy pleasure in collecting his marbles, precious taws and alleys, his tops and story-books, his Indian arrow-heads and other curious bits of stone, — things of so much more value than the rags and tags Homo made a fuss about.

Even Bertie flitted in and out of the room, turning over Skip's possessions, by way of being useful.

"Bertie," the boy said, "the great Bertie, has put a new band on my hat!" and the condescension, from its rarity, made more impression than Homoselle's daily care.

While the latter was still on her knees, bending over the trunk, a servant came to tell her that a gentleman was down-stairs, and wanted to see her.

"A gentleman? Who is it, Cinthy?"

"'Deed, Miss Ulla, I dunno. I never seed him befo'."

"What does he look like?"

"Mostly like a man wid red har, and a mighty deep voice."

"Red hair ! red hair !" said Homoselle, rising, going over in her mind all the men of her acquaintance. "I wonder if it can be Fez Page?" she soliloquized.

"La ! Miss Ulla, I known Mars' Fez ever sence he was bawn. I tell you I ain't never seed dis man befo'."

"Does he look like a gentleman, Cinthy?" continued Homoselle, putting some little touches to her hair.

"Well, sort o', and sort o' not."

"I wonder who it can be ! I wish you had asked his name. How often have I told you to do that?"

"La ! Miss Ulla, it comes mighty onhandy to ask a gen'leman's name right befo' his face."

"It is very unhandy to me," said Homoselle petulantly, "to go down to see a gentleman without an idea who he is. So much has happened lately, I am afraid of everything and everybody."

"You needn't be 'fraid o' dis man, honey. He look like he wouldn't hurt a fly."

When Homoselle got to the drawing-room, she found her visitor quite as timid at the idea of meeting a stranger as she was herself.

He was a large, painfully bashful, red-haired man, whose complexion took a deeper tinge when she entered. He seemed so shy and uncomfortable, that she regained her own self-possession in trying to put him at his ease.

"Did you wish to see me?" she asked kindly, while he twirled his hat, and looked first at the ceiling and

then at the floor, trying to take the first step that costs, and make a beginning of what he had to say.

“Are — are you Miss Homoselle Despard?” he stammered at last, growing redder and redder, seeming to find it “onhandy” to ask a lady’s name before her face.

The rich burr of his voice, which Cinthy had truly described as being “mighty deep,” his hesitation, and his accent, all proclaimed him to be an Englishman.

Homoselle assented to that being her name, while her heart beat impatiently at his slowness; for she at once associated him with another Englishman, hoping that this one had brought tidings of his compatriot.

“My name is Dobbin,” her visitor went on to say, taking his time, and keeping pace with her thoughts flying on before, about as well as a steady-footed ox, which he something resembled, would with winged Pegasus; “and I came to tell you about — about” —

“About?” breathless.

“About a servant-girl of yours.”

“Chloe?”

“I think that is her name.”

“What of her? Where is she?”

“She is at my house, and” —

“And?”

“I am afraid in a very bad way.”

“For Heaven’s sake be quick, and tell me what is the matter with her. I will go to her at once,” said Homoselle, rising.

Dobbin did not take the hint: he was not to be flustered, and he kept his seat.

Homoselle sat down again, dimly recognizing that a man will probably soonest reach his end by being allowed to follow his bent.

"There is something I should like to say," he continued slowly, still very red, but holding on manfully to his purpose and to his hat.

"Oh, I wish you would say it, then!" thought Homoselle, at fever-heat, but curbing herself not to speak, and so interrupt the words that dropped — not flowed — from Dobbin's lips.

"I don't want to get into any trouble with the white people about here on account of harboring a nigger," he went on; "not that I believe that this girl was concerned in the rebellion. But I am an Englishman, and don't own slaves, and every thing I do is suspected."

"Well?"

"I did not want to be drawn into the affair at all. I have never interfered with slavery, and I did not wish to be mixed up with it. But this girl was brought to my house, and I could not in humanity turn her away."

"Oh! why was she not brought here? This is her home," groaned Homoselle.

"You see, the man who brought her was afraid to come to this house. He took advantage of my being a foreigner to beg protection for the girl and himself."

"Shall we go to her now?" said Homoselle, rising again.

"I should like first to have your promise not to say or do any thing to get me into trouble," he said stubbornly.

"Of course, of course. But do tell me if the child is ill?"

"She is badly hurt."

"Take me to her, oh! take me to her," pleaded Homoselle with tears in her eyes.

Dobbin moved at last. "That is what I came for," he said, rising. "She asked for you, said she wanted to see you and the boy she took care of once more."

"Once more? What do you mean?" asked Homoselle fiercely.

"She said she wanted to see you both," stammered Dobbin, correcting himself humbly, frightened by her white face and dilating eyes.

With trembling hands Homoselle collected a few things that she thought would conduce to Chloe's comfort. Then she wrote and despatched a note to the nearest doctor, and left a message for her father, who was out on the farm.

"Come, Skip," she said, hastily tying on her bonnet, "leave your trunk, and come with me."

Something in her voice made Skip look up.

"Where are you goin', Homo?"

"To see Chloe."

"Chloe? Pooh! She ought to come and see us. Where has she been all this time?"

"Ah! child, I am afraid she is very ill. Please don't argue, but get your hat, and come."

Homoselle never knew how she and Skip were bundled into Dobbin's uncomfortable little vehicle, and driven to his house in the heat of a burning Septem--

ber sun. Every sensation was swallowed up in anxiety. Only once she spoke on the way : —

“What man carried Chloe to your house?”

Dobbin did not answer for a moment, and then he said he was not at liberty to tell.

“Was it a negro?”

“No.”

“Ah!”

Silence followed. Even Skip was subdued into quietness by his cousin's grave, anxious face.

When at last the slow, dragging wheels had actually made their last revolution, and Dobbin's wagon stopped in front of his house, Homoselle felt as if she had been travelling for days.

Dobbin's wife, a plain, aguish-looking woman, wrapped in a shawl, stood at the open door, with two or three shy children peeping from behind her at the new-comers.

“How is she?” Dobbin asked briefly.

His wife shook her head gravely.

“No better.”

“Does she know I am coming?” asked Homoselle.

“Yes: she sent me to look for you,” Mrs. Dobbin answered gently, her voice expressing the sympathy she felt for Homoselle's agonized countenance.

“And Skip too?”

“Yes; but I think you had better go in alone at first. I will keep your boy with my children if you say so.”

Homoselle, unable to speak, bowed her head in acquiescence.

The few hurried questions and answers had been exchanged as she ran up the steps. Nothing more was said. Mrs. Dobbin silently led her through the sitting-room, into which the front door opened without an intervening entry, to a small back building that jutted out from the house.

In crossing the room, Homoselle had been aware that a man, looking wretchedly ill and delicate, was lying there on a sofa. She was vaguely conscious, too, of a movement on his part to conceal his face as she entered ; but not before she had seen it, and become aware of a disagreeable association connected with it.

"This is the room," said Mrs. Dobbin, pausing before a closed door that led from the yard into the back building.

Homoselle motioned to her guide to open it, and then went in alone.

The room, evidently a sort of laundry hastily turned into a sleeping-apartment, was bare and cheerless. One of those rudely constructed beds called a cot, two chairs, and a table composed the furniture.

Over the back of one of the chairs hung a jacket and a pair of trousers, which Homoselle recognized as those Chloe had worn on the night of the storm ; and she shuddered to see that they were stained and stiffened with blood. Chloe herself was lying on the low cot, very pale and still, with closed eyes, and brows contracted with pain. She recognized at once Homoselle's light step, and the soft rustle of her dress. "Miss Ulla," she murmured, opening her eyes with a smile, and closing them again.

Homoselle went and knelt beside the bed, and pressed her cheek to the little hand lying outside of the coverlet.

A faint flutter of the fingers returned the mute caress.

“Chloe, darling, I have come to take care of you.”

Another movement of the slender fingers, and a softly-whispered, “Yes, Miss Ulla.”

Homoselle continued kneeling; and, after a few moments’ silence, she spoke again, but this time not to Chloe.

Soft and low, though tremulous, her voice broke the stillness of the sick-room in the solemn office of intercession. Long and earnestly she pleaded for the poor mangled body lying there, for the ardent young soul, its peace here, its happiness hereafter.

When at last her words died away in smothered sobs, she felt again the presence of Chloe’s hand, and a scarcely audible Amen.

An Amen as earnest, but oh! so different from the loud, cheery response of the old Sunday-school days.

Having commended her charge to the divine care, Homoselle rose from her knees, dried her eyes, and began doing what she could for Chloe’s comfort; for the room and its accommodations, although the best the Dobbins had to give, was scarcely adapted to the needs of an invalid.

The first thing she did was to hang her broad hat and veil over a broken place in a shutter, through which the sun sent a burning ray athwart the sick girl’s bed. Having thus pleasantly darkened the room, she

was rewarded by a faint murmur, expressive of satisfaction, from her patient. She went about quietly, putting things in order, and unpacking her satchel, while Chloe's soft dark eyes, from which the light was fading fast, followed her with a look of unutterable tenderness.

Homoselle bathed the sufferer's face and hands, tied up her luxuriant curls, settled her head more comfortably, and substituted cool soft linen for the heavy bed-covering. Remembering Chloe's childish love of perfumes, she had brought with her a flask of cologne-water ; and, when her other arrangements were completed, she poured a few drops on the girl's forehead. With the first whiff of its penetrating fragrance, Chloe drew a long breath of enjoyment. Her eyes brightened ; and she said, with a slightly stronger voice, "Dat's mighty good."

Homoselle seized the opportunity to bend over her, and ask, "Chloe, dear, how did you get hurt ?"

She seemed reluctant to answer ; but the habit of obedience was strong. "Michael done it, Miss Ulla."

Homoselle moistened the parched lips with water. "What made him do it, child ?"

"Said I was a spy."

Nothing more was said then, and Chloe fell into a doze. When she awoke, she asked for water ; and, when Homoselle had relieved her thirst, she said feebly and with great effort, "Don't tell on Michael, Miss Ulla : I made him mighty mad."

Silence again.

Homoselle held the little fevered hand, and waited, counting the minutes until the doctor should come and tell her what to do. She was very ignorant: she knew little about illness, and had never seen a gunshot wound, the trouble from which poor Chloe was suffering. Time dragged wearily on. No sound broke the stillness of the room except Chloe's heavy breathing. Occasionally the voices of the children at play floated in at the open window. Once Chloe started. "Dat's Mars' Skip callin'," she said, with eyes wide open, and ears alert to catch again the childish voice that had so often summoned her to play. "I can't come now," she added in a whisper, sinking back to doze again.

The doctor came at last, in great haste to depart on another errand of life and death. He was a fatherly-looking old man, whose range of medicine was limited, but whose experience of life had been large and varied. As soon as he entered the room, and stood by the bedside, he shook his head gravely. He gazed a while, not unmoved, at the face over which the shadows were creeping; for it was young and beautiful, and to such Death always seems an unwelcome guest. After he had carefully examined Chloe's wound, he turned to Homoselle, her sole attendant.

"Has she no mother?" he asked kindly.

Chloe opened her eyes at the sound of his voice.

"No mother," said Homoselle sorrowfully.

"And no father?"

Chloe's eyes closed again, filled with tears, — the first she had shed, — and her lip quivered.

"No!" cried Homoselle passionately. "She has only *me*."

"Then I must tell *you*, my young friend, that I can do nothing. Her soul is passing," he said solemnly, — "passing to the God who gave it."

His voice trembled. Familiar as he was with scenes of suffering, he could not fail to be touched by the expression of Homoselle's countenance at this unexpected announcement. "If there is any thing to be done," he added very gently, "it must be done quickly."

The doctor went away. Another imperative summons had called him forth that day, and he could not tarry.

Homoselle was dazed with grief; but she had the presence of mind to go to the door, and call Skip. He came into the room, scared and wondering. The change that had come over the face of Chloe, his old playmate, had a terrible meaning that he did not understand. The child, who had not begun to think on the mystery of life, was brought suddenly, for the first time, into the presence of the mystery of death.

Into Chloe's eyes there returned a transient brightness. They were full of intelligence now; and Homoselle, choking with sobs, knew that she understood every thing.

She asked to be raised higher. Homoselle seated herself on the low bed, and gently lifted the girl's head until it rested on her bosom. The glazing eyes looked up into hers with gratitude. "Good-by, Miss Ulla."

Homoselle, her face bending above Chloe's, an-

swered with a long, loving look: she could not speak.

The two faces — Chloe's, from which death was refining all but its spiritual beauty, and Homoselle's, pale with grief and pity — bore a strange, pathetic resemblance to each other.

"Tell ole marster, good-by," continued Chloe, her voice growing fainter. "Good-by, Mars' Skip."

"Chloe!" cried Skip, the terrible truth flashing over him, "where are you goin'? Don't leave me, Chloe. I will be good. I won't plague you any mo'. You shall be my servant always. I'll buy you from uncle Despard. Stay with me. Stay with me."

His childish eloquence broke down: he threw himself on the bed, sobbing violently.

"Don't cry, don't cry, Mars' Skip," she said faintly, but in the old comforting tones.

"Dear Chloe!" cried Homoselle with passionate tenderness, her tears raining over the face of the dying girl.

The voice and the tears roused Chloe once again. She looked into Homoselle's face with loving humility, her eyes expressing dumbly more than her untutored tongue could ever have uttered.

Then the heavy lids closed.

A bright, fleeting smile, such as mothers see flit over the faces of their sleeping infants, and which tells of a joy that passes even a mother's understanding, trembled for a moment on her lips, and her heroic spirit fled.

It had stooped to bless in departing. Homoselle

and Skip never forgot the comfort of her dying smile.

Skip's wail brought Mrs. Dobbin into the room. She was shocked to find that Chloe had actually passed away. She had not anticipated the end so soon. Homoselle's speechless grief touched while it surprised her. It had not occurred to her that the death of a servant-girl could be such an affliction to Miss Despard. It appeared, too, that the poor child had died in her young lady's arms, for her head still rested on Homoselle's bosom when Mrs. Dobbin entered. The good woman gently turned the sobbing Skip out of the room; and together she and Homoselle closed the beautiful eyes, and prepared the body for burial.

Suspended by a ribbon from the dead girl's neck was a silver coin, which they at first supposed was a charm or amulet of some kind. Great was Mrs. Dobbin's surprise to find that it was an English shilling. "A piece of real English money! I wonder where the poor thing got it?" she whispered, her eyes filling with tears at being thus sadly reminded of England.

Homoselle's pale cheek grew paler still at this unaccountable circumstance.

There was but one person from whom Chloe could have received an English shilling. Where was he now? Had he shared her tragic fate?

CHAPTER XXVI.

MAKING THE AMEND.

SKIP was brought to take a last look at his humble companion, who, shrouded in one of Homoselle's softly frilled white gowns, looked strangely beautiful. An expression of perfect repose rested on the smooth, finely accentuated brows and on the placid lips. All the sad offices that love and reverence could suggest, Homoselle had devoted to the remains of the girl who had been faithful unto death.

There was nothing to be done now, but to make preparations for her burial. For this it was necessary that Homoselle should return to Dunmore in order to consult with her father.

In passing through Mrs. Dobbin's sitting-room again on her way to the carriage that was to take her home, she saw the man who had attracted her attention in the morning. He was up now, and moving restlessly but feebly about the room.

It again occurred to her that he shrank from observation; for, turning his back, he went to the window, and looked persistently out on the rows of cabbages that formed the chief feature of the Dobbin's garden; but she perceived that he limped as he walked, and this betrayed his identity. She knew at once that it

was Johnson, the man who had been prominent in instigating the negro rebellion.

She stopped suddenly, her face aflame with wrath, her tears quenched by the angry glow in her eyes, "You," she cried, her voice trembling with emotion. Johnson did not stir. He may not have known that she was addressing him.

She scorned to pronounce his name : it seemed as though her lips would be contaminated by the sound.

"You miserable man !" she said again, this time her voice rising clear and firm. He could no longer feign ignorance of her meaning. He turned towards her, but he did not dare to meet her eyes.

The children, including Skip, startled by the outburst, huddled into a corner, and stared with eyes and mouths wide open.

Even little Mrs. Dobbin was frightened. It seemed to the good woman that Homoselle grew taller and grander as she stood there pointing to the cowering culprit, and overwhelming him with her denunciations.

"Go into that chamber yonder," she said, with terrible meaning, "and see your work. Look at the girl lying there dead, who, but for you, would be alive and happy to-day. Think of the gallows you have been the means of erecting in this State ; and the miserable creatures you have led to a shameful death. Why did you come here, bringing ruin and destruction? Were there no wrongs to redress at home? Had you no paupers to relieve, no widows and orphans to help, no hungry to feed, no naked to clothe? What

are you skulking about here for? Why do you not deliver yourself up to the fate you have brought on those poor deluded negroes?"

Johnson sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands. "Have mercy," he groaned.

"You need not fear that I shall inform on you," she continued. "If you prefer to live with the memory of that dead girl on your conscience, to expiating your crimes on the gallows, I shall not hinder you."

Homoselle did not wait for a reply. She beckoned to Skip to follow her, and together they left the house.

The experience of life often verifies the saying that it never rains but it pours. The day had been a painfully trying one to Homoselle. Her grief for the death of Chloe, and her indignation against the man whom she thought in a great measure responsible for the tragic event, had greatly shaken her. She thought her trials had not ended when she got home, and found Phil Roy pacing the lawn in front of the house, apparently waiting for her return. He was the last person she wished to see. She had not forgotten his charges against Halsey, nor was she likely to forgive them until Halsey himself should return, and triumphantly prove them to be false. Then, but not until then, she would find it easy, both to forgive and to forget Mr. Roy. All this was expressed in her manner as she passed him with a cold salutation on her way to the little porch that led to her father's office.

It was difficult, in the face of her lofty bearing, to make an attempt to arrest her steps, and say what he had to say. Phil would most likely have turned on

his heel, and gone away, leaving her to learn the news from others, but for the traces of grief on her countenance. These moved his pity.

"Homoselle," he entreated, "stop a moment: I have something to say to you."

"If what you have to say," she replied, moving on, "is not very different from what you said when you were last here, I do not care to listen."

"It *is* different, Homoselle, and it is of importance to you."

"I wish you would be quick, then," slackening her pace; "for I am going to my father on a very sad errand, which cannot wait."

"What I have to tell you is about your friend Mr. Halsey," said Phil, not without difficulty, for he was eating the proverbially indigestible humble-pie.

Homoselle's progress came to a full stop. "Mr. Halsey!" she echoed, leaning for support against a flower-trellis. She could not stand another shock to-day. "Mr. Halsey? Is he safe?"

"Perfectly safe," Phil hastened to assure her.

"Then, take care," closing her eyes filled with sweet tears of relief: "I will not not hear any thing against him."

"I have nothing to say against him: on the contrary," said Phil, blurting out the truth manfully, "my business here to-day is to retract all that I have ever said against him."

Homoselle started, bringing down from the trellis a shower of blossoms that fell in bright patches over her head and shoulders.

"To retract ! O Phil !" she said, joyously holding out both hands.

"God bless you, my dear cousin," he said, touched by her generosity, and raising the hands to his lips, "for making it so easy to retract !"

"It is not hard," she said, wiping her eyes, "to forgive one who brings glad tidings. I was afraid Mr. Halsey had been killed."

It was clear that he had been forgiven for Halsey's dear sake ; and, although this gave Phil a pang, it did not alter the fact of her sweet and gracious manner, which made his task so much less difficult than he had anticipated.

"But come in, come in," she continued, tenderly gathering into a posy the blossoms that had fallen over her at the moment she heard of Halsey's safety. "I should like papa to hear. You know, you prejudiced him against Mr. Halsey ; and it is only fair that he should know from yourself that you were mistaken."

Then the thought, for one brief moment forgotten, of Chloe's death, rushed over her ; and she reproached herself for having felt glad at such a time.

Phil followed her into the office, where they found Mr. Despard buried in newspapers. One of his arms was in a sling, and there were bruises about his face, the effect of his recent encounter with Michael. He was so absorbed in reading the details of the attempted insurrection and its suppression, that he did not hear them when they came in.

Homoselle kissed her father with more tenderness

than usual, as a sort of preparation for the sad intelligence she brought.

He was too much interested in what he had been reading, to notice any thing marked in her manner.

"Ah ! is that you, Phil?" he said cordially, glad to have a man with whom to talk over the recent events : "have you seen to-day's 'Whig'?"

"No ; that is, I have seen it, but I have not read it."

"Why, there is a full account of this Gabriel's war in it."

"I suppose so," said Phil, with a little of the inevitable superiority of the better-informed man ; "but I have just returned from Richmond, where I heard all about it from the combatants themselves."

This was interesting indeed. Mr. Despard threw aside his paper, and drew his chair closer to Phil.

"My dear fellow, you don't say so ! To Richmond and back? Why, you must have gone up one day, and come back the next."

"So I did."

"And did you see the governor?" eagerly.

"Yes, by a great good chance, for there were five hundred other fellows wanting to see him at the same time. The poor man has had the torture of 'the question' applied to him with unmitigated severity."

Mr. Despard was too excited to notice Phil's face-tiousness ; and Homoselle sat looking on, sadly wondering when she could disengage her father's attention sufficiently to tell him the part poor Chloe had played in this terrible Gabriel's war.

"And did you see the fellow Gabriel too?" continued Mr. Despard.

"Yes, I saw him ; poor wretch !"

"Yes, a poor, deluded wretch. The worst man of all is that white scoundrel Johnson." Homoselle started guiltily at the name. "Have they found him?"

"No : he took care to keep his precious white skin out of danger."

"The brute Michael, you know, was taken here, on my place," said Mr. Despard, stroking his wounded arm. "But, Phil, do tell me, have they discovered who swam the river that night, and roused the town? Whoever it is, the State of Virginia ought to erect a monument to his or her memory."

A peculiar expression flitted over Phil's countenance, and his voice changed a little, as he answered briefly, "Yes, it is known who the man is."

"It *was* a man, then. I was sure of it. No woman could have done a thing like that. But do you know who the man is?"

"Yes."

"Speak, Phil. Tell us all about it. It is like drawing teeth to get any thing out of you."

"You see," said Phil, cautiously shutting the door, and speaking in a low voice, "it is thought advisable to keep the man's name a secret, for fear the negroes may try to kill him. It may be possible to keep the thing quiet ; for he is a foreigner, and not liable to be suspected."

"A foreigner !" exclaimed Mr. Despard. "What

knowledge or interest could a foreigner have had in the matter?"

"That I will leave you to judge. He is an Englishman."

"An Englishman!" cried Homoselle and her father together.

"And his name is Halsey."

It was a treat to Phil to watch Mr. Despard's face as he made this announcement. He read there the varying expressions of amazement to incredulity, and from incredulity to dawning and reluctant conviction, that had passed through his own mind when he heard of Halsey's gallant feat.

"Not our Halsey, Phil? Not the man we know?"

"Yes, our Halsey, the very man we know."

"My Halsey," murmured Homoselle inaudibly, her face luminous with delight, not surprise, that he should have proved himself a hero.

"And all the talk about his being an instigator of the rebellion and an abductor of slaves is a lie?" asked Mr. Despard sternly.

"A cruel lie," returned Phil penitently.

"And what becomes of the horrible story about Chloe and himself? And where is the girl?"

"Papa!" said Homoselle.

"One word, Homoselle," interrupted Phil. "Let me make amends, as far as I can, for my unjust suspicion of Halsey. My only justification is, that appearances were strongly against him."

"Yes, even the major agrees to that," said Homo-

selle, willing, now, to make excuses for Phil, so honestly acknowledging that he had been wrong.

"Thank you, my dear cousin ; and Halsey himself admits it."

"Have you seen him?" exclaimed Homoselle.

"Yes, I have seen him and apologized. He behaved in the kindest way about it ; said he understood exactly how I had made the mistake : that he had been obliged to hold constant communication with the girl, for she kept him informed of the negro plans. It was his object all along to save, as far as possible, both the negroes and the whites ; and circumstances, even the elements, aided him in his undertaking. Terrible as the affair has been, it would have been much worse, had the negro meetings been discovered prematurely, for the whites would have exterminated the race ; and, if the whites had not learned of the plot in the nick of time, there is no telling what mischief the negroes would have done."

"I stick to my opinion," said Mr. Despard, "that the State of Virginia ought to commemorate this deed of Halsey's : only I think he should divide honors with the girl Chloe."

"Halsey himself says she deserves all the credit," said Phil.

"Papa," began Homoselle again tremulously, her eyes filling with tears afresh at this tribute to Chloe's heroism.

Mr. Despard turned to his daughter, and noticed, for the first time, her countenance, which bore unmis-

takable evidences of the sad experiences she had gone through.

"Well, my darling."

"Did you get my message this morning?"

"No, dear: I have not been in the house long, and have seen nobody. I came directly here, to read my papers undisturbed."

"I left word that I had been summoned to see our poor Chloe."

"Chloe? Is there any thing amiss with her?"

"O papa! Phil was right in supposing that the negroes, or some of them at least, would take vengeance on a betrayer; and our Chloe has been sacrificed."

"You don't mean that — that" —

"Yes, dear papa: Michael shot her, and" —

"And?"

"She died in my arms this morning."

Mr. Despard stared as though he had not understood. "Died?" he repeated coldly, raising his hand feebly to his wounded arm, and turning deadly white.

"What is it, papa? Is it the pain?" cried Homoselle, frightened.

"Yes, the pain." Then, after a pause, "Good-by, Roy. Leave me a while, Ellie: I can bear the pain better alone."

CHAPTER XXVII.

BURIAL.

CHLOE had been brought home ; and her body lay in its coffin, in the drawing-room at Dunmore. The story had got abroad, that she had been a spy and a traitor to her own people ; and very few of the negroes went near the house while her remains were there awaiting burial.

Only Cinthy and a few other women came to take a last look at the girl who had grown up among them, and who, until now, had been a general favorite.

Skip had been sent home at last. He had been so distressed and excited by Chloe's death, that Homoselle was glad to have him out of the way before the burial-services, which were to take place in the evening. She had agreed to his taking the Baby away with him as a sort of consolation ; although she knew that his father would not enjoy such an addition to his family, already more than well provided with four-footed members.

In the morning, soon after breakfast, Homoselle and Bertie were sitting together in the darkened dining-room, making a garland ; selecting buds and sprays from a mass of flowers that lay in damp, fragrant heaps on a table before them. The house was very still.

The presence of Death seemed to have hushed all the commonplace noises of every-day life. Homoselle spoke little ; and even Bertie, irrepressible as ever in saying what she had a mind to say, spoke in a subdued voice, as though the maid in the next room was not dead, but slept, and might be wakened.

"And so Mr. Halsey is entirely rehabilitated, and is coming back as a sort of conquering hero?" Bertie observed in an undertone.

"No : he has only had an opportunity of showing what he really is," returned Homoselle with as much spirit as she could exhibit in a whisper.

"'It is an ill wind that blows nobody good.' One would never have imagined that there was any thing in him, but for this horrid affair."

Homoselle said nothing. She felt at a disadvantage. Bertie's words conveyed all, probably more than all, her meaning, spoken in a low, impressive voice, while a retort lost half its force by being whispered ; besides, she could not take up the cudgels, even for Halsey, at such a time.

"Do you know, Homoselle," put in Bertie parenthetically, holding up admiringly her end of the garland, heavy with beautiful buds, "I hardly think these splendid white flowers symbolize poor Chloe. Wouldn't yellow roses and African lilies do better?"

"Chloe's *soul* is white, Bertie."

"There is something in that," Bertie agreed, going on with her garland, and resuming her previous theme. "But why did Mr. Halsey remain so long at Richmond? Why not come back, and explain what kept

him away from the duel? Then we should not have thought all those dreadful things about him. I hate having to take the back-track."

"Phil says he had a chill after his exposure that night, and was quite ill for a day or two. The doctor and the governor, with whom he was staying, would not hear of his leaving his bed."

"A chill! That sounds commonplace enough."

"Heroes are human, you know."

"Well, I don't wish to take away from his heroism; but I, for one, cannot receive him with open arms. There are still some unexplained circumstances."

Homoselle flushed at this. "Having trusted him so far, I can trust him to the end. Papa says that Virginia, this grand old mother of States, ought to erect a monument to him," she said, her eyes kindling with pardonable pride.

"Pooh! I don't care about her being the mother of States. If I have to be grateful to him for saving Virginia, it is because she is the mother of *me*."

They worked in silence for a while; and then Bertie, snapping her thread, exclaimed under her breath, "There, the twine and the green have both given out, and I can't go on with the flowers. You want the garland fully a yard longer, didn't you say?"

"Yes: I should like it long enough to wreath round and round the coffin. Flowers are the only things of which we have plenty, and they are the last visible tribute we can pay: besides, I think they are appropriate, for she was as beautiful as she was brave and good."

"Brave and good, I grant you. But, Homoselle,

do you know, I think it a little immoral to talk about the beauty of a colored girl."

"O Bertie! Wasn't her beauty a gift from the same hand as the beauty of a rose?"

"If you want the wreath a yard longer, you will have to go out and get more arbor-vitæ for the foundation, and geranium-leaves to mix with the buds. Yes, go: the air will do you good. You have been looking like a ghost for days. I will hunt up a ball of string I have somewhere."

Homoselle rose with alacrity. A breath of air was what she most wanted. She took up her basket and garden-scissors, and went out, with a sudden rush of tears when she remembered that it had always been Chloe who carried the basket.

The day was perfect, — one of those tender, autumnal days, whose beauty, hovering between smiles and tears, does not jar upon the saddest mood. The sun shone bright and warm; but its brightness was chastened by a soft haze that at any moment might turn to rain. The air was balmy and sweet, but with a touch of warning, as if with all its sweetness it might bring a storm. The trees had changed from the lusty green of summer to pale brown and yellow tints; and the leaves were everywhere falling, falling, ever so gently, but ever so surely.

The arbor-vitæ alone stood dark and unchanging, where every thing else spoke sadly of the dying year.

Planted long ago as ornamental shrubs, they had grown into stately trees, enclosing in their double ranks a sombre alley, along which Homoselle walked,

snipping here and there, filling her basket with fragrant twigs.

Musing with tender regret on Chloe, whose light footsteps would never follow hers again, she heard a rustling, pattering sound behind her ; and looking over her shoulder with a frightened, furtive glance, she saw Dash, — poor old Dash, who, deprived of Chloe, Skip, and the Baby, was seeking human companionship.

“Come on, old fellow, come with me. I will be your friend now.”

For response Dash rubbed his head gently against her knees.

An autumnal chilliness in the shaded walk made Homoselle glad to emerge into the warmth and light of the open flower-beds, where the geraniums were sunning their splendid masses of pink and scarlet.

The air, swarming with lazily floating insects, catching the sunlight on their wings, seemed shot with gold. Dewy cobwebs spread their shining nets over shrub and flower. Crimson-breasted robins pecked busily in the rich brown soil, making the most of the waning season.

Homoselle had stooped to gather her geranium-leaves, when she heard the far-off click of the garden-gate. Always expectant, she rose hastily to see who was there ; but a sweet-brier thorn, catching her muslin dress, detained her gently and effectually. Some moments elapsed before she could safely disengage the light fabric from the briers, and then it was too late. Whoever had gone in or out of the gate had passed out of sight.

The circumstance was forgotten before she had gathered her leaves, and gone back to her work.

She entered the house quietly, and crept softly past the drawing-room and its silent occupant, to the room she had left. Bertie was not there. Probably she had not yet found the ball of string. But Halsey, who had not heard the light approach, was there, standing beside the table, looking down on the flowers and the unfinished garland.

Words could not express what Homoselle felt. She stood for a moment, looking wistfully at the desire of her eyes. All the agony of suspense that she had endured during his absence, all her joy at seeing him again, struggled for utterance, and yet she could not speak. When she found her voice, the only words that came were a low-breathed "At last !"

They conveyed all her meaning to Halsey, who turned, and found her whom he came to seek, standing by his side. Drawing her gently to him, and pressing his lips on her forehead, her own words welled up from the depths of his heart, "At last, my beloved, at last !"

His manner, grave almost to sternness, made her glance towards the drawing-room.

"You have seen?" she whispered.

"Yes, I have seen ; and it is a terrible shock. I went in there hoping to see you, glad to welcome me back ; and I found, instead, that poor girl, *dead*. I knew nothing of it. How did it happen?"

"You know that Michael was one of those who escaped when the negro army was captured?"

“Yes ; but he was taken afterwards.”

“Ah ! but he was taken on this very place. He came directly here in search of Chloe, whom he suspected.”

“And this was his work ? ”

“Yes, she told me herself.”

Halsey groaned. Was it possible, that, in his anxiety to save Richmond, he had overlooked any precaution that might have prevented this tragedy ?

“How terrible it is ! ” he said at last. “Everybody is inclined to give me the credit that belongs entirely to that poor child. I could have done nothing without her ; and here am I, alive and unhurt, while she has been cruelly *murdered* ! ”

To Homoselle it seemed almost as if Halsey thought he had been ungenerous in not being murdered himself. She shyly drew nearer to him to express her gratitude that he had been spared.

“I have come to you at a sad time, my darling,” he said, gently smoothing her soft hair : “I have had another shock to-day. I came to break it to you myself, for I knew your kind heart would grieve for my loss. My old friend the major passed away this morning at daybreak. I ” —

Halsey could not proceed : his voice broke, and his eyes filled with tears. Homoselle’s filled too.

They remained silent, their young hearts full of love and sorrow, — sorrow that drew the bands of their love closer, and made them dearer to each other than any joy could have done.

Homoselle was the first to break the silence. “To think that I saw him only the day before yesterday,

the very day Chloe died ! He was so gentle and courteous to me, and he gave me his blessing."

"I have lost my best friend," said Halsey, in an unsteady, husky voice.

"And mine," murmured Homoselle softly, "since he was the means of bringing you to America."

There was another pause ; and then Homoselle said musingly, —

"It must have been the major whom the doctor hurried away from Chloe's bedside to attend. I was in such distress, I did not think to ask. I am glad, dear, you saw him before he died."

"Yes, it was a great privilege. You understand, love, that it was his illness that kept me from you these last two days? In Richmond I wrote to you ; but everybody was so excited over the negroes, that nothing was done. I found, the morning I left for home, that my messenger had forgotten to mail my letter ; and I brought it along with me. You know, these dear Virginians think to-morrow quite as good as to-day, in which to do any thing, and the day after to-morrow better than either."

Before Homoselle could reply to this mild impatience of Virginian slowness, Bertie entered with the ball of string.

Her countenance was a curious study when her near-sighted eyes had taken in who it was with Homoselle. Her manner, too, and attempt to express her appreciation of his public services and at the same time indicate her disapproval of himself, would have puzzled a man less pre-occupied than Halsey.

As it was, he rose to give her his usual greeting, and was taken aback by her appearing not to notice his out-stretched hand.

"Ah ! Mr. Halsey, it is you," she said rallying, and remembering the tone she had resolved to take when they met. "I congratulate you on your safe return after your perilous adventures by flood and field. We are under great obligations to you for having delivered us from a frightful calamity ; and I, for one, am glad of an opportunity to express my individual thanks."

Had Halsey not been weary and sad, it might have struck him that this speech savored of careful preparation. His grief was too real to bandy compliments ; and he resumed his seat, saying simply, that he was glad it had been in his power to be of service.

"The last time we met," continued Bertie, seating herself by the table, and resuming her work, "I said some very unkind things to you ; but you know I had cause. Phil and I found you in a very equivocal position, one evening, you remember. I confess I should have welcomed you back to Dunmore with better heart, but for this circumstance."

"Thank you, Miss Despard, for being so honest," said Halsey, without a particle of the hesitation that often marred his speech. Bertie's words roused a spirit too strong for embarrassment : he spoke with such dignity and simplicity, that Homoselle, who had been overcome with confusion by Bertie's painful allusion, dropped the flowers with which she was working, in her lap, and looked on with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes.

"It makes it easier for me to explain what I acknowledge needs an explanation. The time has now come when there can be no objection to my telling you that for a moment in the twilight, my short-sighted eyes mistook Chloe for your niece. You will not be offended, love," turning humbly to Homoselle, who answered with a tearful smile.

"Oh, no !" she said, shaking her head : "Chloe was more beautiful than I could ever hope to be."

"The mistake was a natural one," Halsey went on to say : "Chloe's back was turned towards me, and she had on one of Homoselle's dresses, all of which I know, every line and fold, by heart."

Homoselle's eyes flashed at this unexpected confession.

"I could not speak of this before, Miss Despard," he continued, "for reasons you may guess. Mr. Despard did not wish the affection existing between his daughter and myself acknowledged. I respected his wish as long as I could ; but now justice to myself, and, above all, to that poor girl, who cannot speak for herself, obliges me to say that the love you saw and heard me express was not intended for Chloe, but for Homoselle."

It is a fine thing to see and hear a man, strong in innocence, bring to naught unworthy suspicions against himself. Homoselle never felt so proud of her lover.

Bertie was confounded at the simple solution of what she had believed, not without reason, to be an ugly mystery.

She was not long in recovering herself.

"I see," she said frankly and coolly : " why, to be sure ! I wonder this explanation never occurred to me ; for I remember, now, the first time poor Chloe wore that dress after Homoselle gave it to her, I made the same mistake myself. Well, I am glad," she added heartily, rising, and shaking hands with Halsey, " and I wish you a great deal of happiness. Now I will go and tell my brother what a mistake I have made."

So saying, she went out of the room, leaving Halsey and Homoselle together.

It had been determined at first, that Chloe's funeral should be a public one, to which all the prominent people in the county were to be invited, as a mark of appreciation of her loyalty and devotion to the white race ; but in the end more prudent counsels prevailed. The family agreed that a public demonstration of any kind would be inexpedient in the present excited state of feeling. She was buried very quietly, in a beautiful spot chosen by Homoselle herself, near the family cemetery. In the evening, just before sunset, her coffin, wreathed with a garland of white roses, was lowered into its resting-place. A sorrowing group stood by the open grave, while the cold thud of falling earth followed the rector's solemn "Dust to dust ; ashes to ashes."

They lingered until the last shovelful was thrown upon the fresh mound, over which the level rays of the sinking sun played softly.

Mr. Despard, looking old and broken, with his arm still in a sling, was there. He, with the weeping Homoselle, had followed as chief mourners. Bertie

and Phil Roy, Halsey and Dash, were there. These, with Cinthy, and a few other house-servants, were all who witnessed the interment of the poor mangled body ; but who can doubt the blessed company that welcomed the spirit of one who loved so much ?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"IN PRISON, AND YE VISITED ME."

THE jail in Richmond, in which the misguided Gabriel was confined prior to his trial, was besieged by crowds of curious spectators, who came from all parts of the country to get a glimpse of the black arch-fiend. The man bore the ordeal well for a time ; but his nervous system broke down after a while under the continued glare of eyes that regarded him as a sort of caged wild beast.

The dignity and simplicity of his bearing in adversity did not fail to strike the more thoughtful ; and many who came to execrate went away full of pity that so fine a specimen of the race had not found a legitimate field for the exercise of his powers. None doubted that a speedy trial and short shrift awaited the leaders of the insurrection ; and some pitiful soul obtained from the authorities that Gabriel should not be subjected to the gibes of the multitude during the time that remained to him to live.

When the populace had been excluded from the jail-precincts, and he had been left in peace for a brief space, he recovered his native tranquillity, and spoke calmly and frankly of what he believed to have been his mission in life.

He said that a strange circumstance had occurred in his childhood, which made an indelible impression upon him, and probably first suggested the idea of his being set apart for some great purpose. Being at play with other children when three or four years old, his mother overheard him tell them something, which, she said, happened before he was born. He persisted in his story, however, and went on to confirm it by telling other incidents that had occurred at the same time. His mother, not knowing what to make of these strange revelations, called on others, who were greatly astonished, knowing that every thing he related had actually taken place. This caused them to say in his hearing that he would surely be a great prophet, for the Lord had showed him things that happened before his birth. His parents strengthened him in the belief that he was intended for a great purpose, which they had always thought from certain marks on his head and breast. This belief, doubtless, laid the foundation of the enthusiasm which resulted so disastrously to himself and his followers. Gabriel, as he grew up, was fully persuaded that he should accomplish the freedom of his race. All his thoughts and faculties were directed to this end.

His master attested to his being greatly superior in intelligence to his fellow-slaves, over whom he gained unbounded influence by the austerity of his life and the gentleness of his manners. The man who, for long years after his death, was spoken of with bated breath in connection with what is known as Gabriel's war, and whose name was the bogey of the

nursery, was represented by his owners to have been, during life, mild, temperate, industrious, the delight of children, and the friend of the unfortunate.

One evening, after Gabriel's trial and condemnation to death, and not long before the day appointed for his execution, a man, who had taken upon his shoulders the divine Master's yoke, and whose calling was to visit them who are sick and in prison, asked and obtained admission to the malefactor's cell.

Gabriel was seated on the side of the rude bench that served him for a bed. His face was turned towards the small grated window, through which the evening light, filtering between outer and inner prison walls, shone dimly.

He did not move, or even appear to hear, when his visitor entered.

His eyes, of which only a gleaming line of white was visible in his dusky face, seemed turned inward with his mental gaze.

"Gabriel!" said his visitor in a low voice, "Gabriel!" and Gabriel, shuddering, slowly opened his large dark eyes, as if recalling with difficulty his bodily and spiritual sight from some far-off land of visions. As soon as his glance fell on the countenance of the man who had spoken so gently, he recognized that this could not have been one of the crowd that had clamored with curses around his prison-window. The man's very face seemed to carry a benediction with it; and Gabriel with the old habit of a slave, but with a difference too, answered meekly, "Master."

“You are going on a long journey, my friend. Are you prepared?”

The voice, full of human sympathy, broke down the calmness with which Gabriel had faced the multitude; and the words touched the very core of his anguish.

“I dunno, I dunno, master,” he cried, his broad chest heaving with sobs. “I seem to be gropin’ through the Valley of Shadders; and I can’t find no comfort.”

“I know, I know,” returned the other tenderly; “and I have come, my brother, to help you to find the Light.”

“Sometimes I think I was doin’ the Lord’s will in tryin’ to free my brethren,” continued Gabriel, pouring out, without reserve, the pent-up sorrows of his lonely heart to this stranger who seemed to understand his difficulties as well as though he had been through the same terrible experience himself; “and then agin I feel like I was all wrong. One time I believe that all I wanted was my people’s freedom; and another time I am afeard I was considerin’ too much ’bout Gabriel bein’ thar deliverer, instead of leavin’ it to the Lord to act in his own good time. I dunno which way is right. My po’ soul is tossed about like a ship in a storm.”

“Yes, I understand; and, Gabriel, we will seek together the Master, who says to the tempest-tossed, ‘Peace, be still.’”

The old, familiar words, heard unheeded a hundred times amid the ordinary scenes of life, coming now in this dark hour to the man who felt himself

an outcast of the world and forsaken of God, sounded like a sweet message from home : "Peace, be still."

Gabriel bowed his head, and wept.

Gently, step by step, through the long watches of that terrible night, did the friend of sinners and lover of souls lead Gabriel to the knowledge of his transgressions, to his need of pardon, to forgiveness of his judges, and, hardest of all, to joy in expiation ; yes, to rejoice with jubilant gladness in the prospect of the gallows, as the only means of atonement left to him. Gabriel belonged to the class of enthusiasts whose souls soar with no middle flight above the needs and passions of ordinary men.

The last bitter drop in his cup was, that he had been the means of leading others to the same doom as himself.

"This, even this, Gabriel," said his friend, "you must leave to the Infinite Mercy. We can never know, in this world, what are the eternal consequences of our personal influence. To me it is the greatest and saddest of mysteries."

Towards morning, Gabriel's visitor asked him if there were no worldly concerns he would like to have attended to, — no message to wife and children.

Gabriel shook his head. "Wife and children ain't for men like me, marster. My mind was too full of burnin' thoughts of the work I thought the Lord had given me to do. I carried my life in my han', ready to lay it down any minute for the good cause. Oh, the good cause !" he cried with a wild burst of grief as the memory of his wasted life and shattered hopes swept over him again.

It was some time before he regained the mastery of himself, and then he continued quite calmly, "No : I don't leave nobody behin' to mourn for Gabriel. Thank the Lord for that ! My father and mother is both dead ; an' I was thar only chile. But if you would go to them other po' prisoners, an' tell 'em I ask thar forgiveness, I will be grateful in this worl' and the nex'."

He seemed comforted by the assurance that his request would be attended to : and then, after a pause, he said, timidly and humbly, "One mo' thing, good marster : if I meet you in the nex' worl', I won't know what name to call you."

His visitor smiled gravely, and did not answer for a moment. "Can't you wait until then?" he asked after a while.

"I'd like to know now."

"My name is Berkeley, — John Berkeley."

About daybreak Gabriel, worn out with the mental strain, fell into a deep sleep.

His visitor, standing by the bedside, took a long last look at his countenance before he went away. Its lineaments he never forgot ; and often, in after-years, when they had mouldered in the dust, he would describe them with reverence and pity to the children of another generation.

To any but the most casual observer of the negro race in America, it is obvious that there are among them descendants of African tribes differing from one another quite as distinctly as our foreign white population of different nationalities. While some, in appearance and intelligence, seem little removed from the

brute creation, others ascend far higher in the scale of humanity ; and here and there one meets with a man so far superior to the rest, that he may have descended from a royal tribe. Such an one Gabriel appeared to the man who bent above his couch with silent prayers for his soul's weal. He seemed about forty years old, a full-blooded African of a dark bronze-color. His head was a fine oval, dome-like above the brow, its severe outline scarcely interrupted by the small, delicate ears, lying flat against the skull. His features, from the straight, level brows to the full, rounded chin, although heavier than the average white man's, were finely formed and of noble expression. The easy pose of his body, as he lay asleep, showed him to be strong and well made, although thin almost to attenuation.

"May it be even as you said, poor fellow," murmured the watcher, "that we shall meet in a better world ! for the crooked ways shall be made straight, and the rough ways smooth, and all flesh, black and white, shall see the salvation of God."

The next day but one, Gabriel, in company with five other negroes, was hanged in the jail-yard, in the presence of a few witnesses.

His name, and unsuccessful attempt to liberate his fellow-slaves, are dismissed with a paragraph in the written histories of the time. In the unwritten history of tradition he lives, among his own people, as a hero and a martyr. His figure is becoming less distinct in the full blaze of liberty achieved by other hearts and hands. It will doubtless soon lapse into the shadow-land of myths.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONCLUSION.

SEVERAL months had elapsed, and it was now near to Christmas. The season was being ushered in with all the traditional honors. The old year was donning his snowy mantle, and gemming his holly-crown with brilliant points and spears of ice. The wind came out from the north with a sonorous blast, that set the leafless trees to sighing and shivering. The Dunmore and Westover houses, with their substantial brick walls, smoking chimneys, and glowing windows, made bright, warm patches of color in a wintry landscape. Outside, every thing was covered with snow; and the soft white flakes were still falling, blotting out the roads and walks, muffling the trees and bushes, and spreading a downy covering over the graves of the major and Chloe, where the kindly grass had not yet begun to spring.

Both houses were doing their best to make up for the bleak, cheerless aspect of things without. There were roaring fires in every room. The walls were being festooned with wreaths of holly and mistletoe, and fragrant fringes and tassels of pine-needles. Silver and glass were being burnished up. The best china was being brought out, and pantry-shelves were being laden with all sorts of toothsome dainties.

Men and women servants, and, above all, children, were hurrying to and fro, their dark faces irradiated with the double glow of happy smiles and the ruddy flame of generous hearth-fires ; for, in true Virginian fashion, the doors were all left open, and halls and stairways caught the brightness of the cheerful blaze.

Both houses were evidently in a flutter of preparation, and with good reason. Besides the Christmas festival, Dunmore was making ready for a wedding, and Westover for the home-coming of a bride ; and so it came to pass that the snow so industriously powdering the world outside had not all the white favors to itself. To say nothing of the huge glistening bride-cake, there was spread out on a bed in one of the Dunmore rooms, a satin dress, whose soft shining folds extended into a train of courtly length ; a pair of tiny satin slippers ; a voluminous veil of delicate lace ; and a wreath of orange-blossoms of spotless virgin white, for Homoselle, — the girl who had been struggling with poverty and old clothes all her life. Her girlish dream of wearing, for once at least, the soft, beautiful raiment of satin and lace, had come true, and so soon.

There were more life and movement at Dunmore than had been for many a long year. The old walls echoed to the sound of youthful voices and merry laughter. The long-disused guest-chambers were opened and occupied. A leaf or two had been added to the dining-table. The larder and cellar were plentifully supplied, and the wide-open kitchen-door emitted savory odors from morning until night. Mr. and Mrs. Din-

widdie, who had returned from Europe on purpose for the occasion, with their two sons and a French maid, were staying in the house. Skip had come back for the Christmas holidays. The Rev. John Berkeley was sojourning there for a short time ; likewise Phil Roy, who was magnanimous enough to make himself generally useful at this busy time, and to act as Halsey's best man on the occasion of his marriage.

The Haroun Alraschid who had made all these pleasant things possible was the gallant Major Carter, who, it was found when his will came to be read, had divided his possessions between Halsey and Homoselle. To Halsey, who had conscientious scruples against owning slaves, he left the greater part of his personal property, except the negroes ; while to Homoselle he bequeathed the fine old Westover estate and all his slaves, of which there were a great many, with the request that she would be a kind mistress to them. Homoselle, by this will, had been made one of the wealthiest girls in Virginia.

A great change had come into her life in consequence, — a change to which she had by no means become accustomed, and over which she would often rub her eyes to assure herself that it was not all a dream. Her new honors and privileges were not without corresponding responsibilities, of which she was painfully aware. The knowledge that she was sovereign mistress of the life and labor of so many human beings, although she did not shrink from the position, often weighed heavily on her young spirit. Her great aspiration was that she should fulfil the trust as well as

the major had done, and that, when she came to die, like him she would be followed to the grave by the blessings and tears of all who had called him master.

There were many things to be thought of and to be done at present, however; and just now Homoselle was occupied in labelling Christmas packages for the Dunmore servants, that she wanted to give with her own hands before she went away to another home.

This done, she went with Phil to pronounce judgment on the decorations he had been putting up in the drawing-room and hall.

"Beautiful, Phil," she said, really surprised at the fine effect of the garlands and wreaths he had festooned on the walls after the manner of a classic frieze. "I had no idea the old room could look so grand. And the tall clock, too, dressed out in haw and holly! It's enough to make old Time feel young again."

"Or as if he were going to be married."

Homoselle blushed. "Too many incumbrances, with that scythe and hourglass. Phil, can you spare me this bright little wreath?"

"No: that is my *chef d'œuvre*, with all the reddest berries, and intended for the punch-bowl."

"Well, this white one, full of mistletoe-berries that look just like pearls?"

"No. That is for the bride's cake."

"Then, it is the very one I should like to have."

Phil shrugged his shoulders; but seeing her look grave he said, "Why, of course you can have either or both. They are all for you."

"Thank you. And will you do me a favor, or rather

add a favor to all these?" looking gratefully round on the work he was doing.

"Any thing in my power. Why ask, cousin?" he said, becoming grave too.

"To-morrow, you know, will be my wedding-day."

"Ah! I know."

"Will you, to-morrow early, take this wreath, intended for me, and lay it on Chloe's grave? I have just been putting up Christmas gifts for all the others, and I don't want her to be forgotten. She would have been so happy on my wedding-day!"

"I will do it," said Phil, turning away to fasten a sprig of mistletoe over the door.

It was Homoselle's fate, at present, to be at everybody's bidding, and everybody wanted her at the same time.

She was so pleased and happy to be of such importance, that she tried her best, in spite of the philosophy of indivisibility, to be everywhere and to do every thing at the same moment.

Aunt Dinwiddie's pleasant voice was calling her now, and she hurried away from Phil to see what the lady wanted. It was aunt Dinwiddie who had selected the bridal outfit in Paris, not without a hint in regard to the wedding-dress from a young gentleman who well remembered the day in which Homoselle had expressed a fancy for satin and lace and high-stepping horses. Mrs. Dinwiddie, in consequence, felt responsible for the success of the *trousseau* in general, and the fit of the wedding-dress in detail.

It was about this latter that Homoselle was wanted

now. If any alterations were necessary, Delphine, the French maid, must make them at once.

Homoselle loved to be with her aunt, who came nearer to being a mother to her than any one else ; and she fancied, too, that the mother whom she had never seen must have resembled her sister, who was a graceful, interesting-looking woman, with blue eyes and waving brown hair. Besides all this, she could never forget the generosity and promptness with which her aunt had come to her assistance when there was a probability of Chloe being sold.

The financial part of this indebtedness had been cancelled, but Homoselle's gratitude remained the same.

Mrs. Dinwiddie had the faculty of creating pleasant, home-like surroundings, of whose influence Homoselle was always conscious in her aunt's company. The big, rather bare-looking guest-chamber, in which Mrs. Dinwiddie was domiciled, had undergone quite a transformation in the last few days, with its occupant's pretty toilet-arrangements, bright soft rugs, and comfortable sea-chairs. The warm, luxurious atmosphere of the room was pervaded with a fresh, delicious odor, partly a reminiscence of the forest, from the logs blazing on the hearth, and partly a memory of Paris, escaping from cut-glass flagons on the dressing-table, — an odor that fairly typified Mrs. Dinwiddie herself, who grafted the refinements of a high civilization on a sweet, unspoiled nature. She was dressed charmingly, almost too charmingly to suit the taste of the average Virginian matron, who, when first youth is past, subsides so easily into plain, unbecoming attire.

Her pretty morning dress of soft gray wool, with glimpses of rose-tinted linings and doublings, was so perfect in color and fit as to savor of worldliness ; and her delicate hands were so soft and white as to suggest idleness to one of our industrious housewives.

She was busy just now, examining, with the assistance of Delphine, a long-trained satin dress that was spread over a sofa and several chairs.

Mr. Dinwiddie, who was in the pitiable position of a city man snowed up in the country with nothing to do, was leaning back in an arm-chair, industriously paring his nails. He was a tall, stout, rather pompous-looking person, with gray mutton-chop whiskers, and side-locks brushed very much forward to make up, apparently, for the absence of hair on the top of his head. His appearance was eminently respectable ; but one saw at a glance that he was not made of such fine clay as his wife. His two sons, George and Julian, fine, well-grown youths of eighteen and twenty, had each possession of a window, and were looking out on the whitening landscape, and recalling the time, not so very long ago, when they were boys, and used to set traps for snowbirds, many of which brave little creatures were hopping about on the new-fallen snow.

“Ah, there you are !” said aunt Dinwiddie when Homoselle entered.

“Why, auntie !” exclaimed the latter at sight of the satin gown. “Of how much more importance my dress is than myself ! *I* never took up as much room in the world as a sofa and three chairs.”

The gentlemen brightened up at the sound of

Homoselle's voice, but their countenances fell when she was immediately seized upon to discuss clothes.

"Come, boys," said Mr. Dinwiddie, rising, "let us get out of this. We are in the way here. When the millinery is all done with, we may hope to have a little rational conversation. — Eh, Homoselle?"

"My wife shall be married in linsey-woolsey," said Julian; "and then, perhaps, she will think more about me than about her dress."

"And I won't have any wife at all, now Homy is going to marry another fellow," said George.

The next moment these two young gentlemen were heard scampering through the house in full chase after Skip, who shouted defiantly at the top of his voice, "Hobblede-hoys, neither men nor boys."

The wedding-dress was found to fit to perfection. Aunt Dinwiddie and Delphine exchanged significant glances. Homoselle herself was surprised at the magic wrought in her appearance. The reflection she saw in the mirror was an idealized Homoselle, taller, fairer, more stately, than the girl who had just laid aside a plain merino gown. The bodice fitted without a wrinkle to break the graceful contour of her girlish figure, or mar the softly gleaming surface of the satin. The skirt fell round her in long, shining folds, that shimmered in silvery patches of light, or softened into luxurious depths of shadow, with every movement of the wearer.

"Why, Homoselle, how beautiful you are!" her aunt exclaimed involuntarily.

"*Ciel!*" murmured the little sallow-faced French-

woman in a quiver of excited admiration, passing her hand caressingly over the thick, creamy satin, and looking up at the grand, fair-tinted girl who towered a foot above her sleek, *bien coiffée* head.

“Sugar and spice, and all that’s nice,”

cried Skip, changing his tune as he burst into the pantry, where Cinthy was arranging cakes, creams, jellies, and the like, on her well-scrubbed shelves. His pursuers, George and Julian, were at his heels; but he managed to ensconce himself behind Cinthy’s ample person before he was caught.

“Aunt Cinthy,” he said, as coaxingly as his panting lungs would permit, “give me another plum-cake, and I’ll help you to fix the goodies.”

“Help me! You shouldn’t tech one of these things for yo’ weight in gole. Thar wouldn’t be nothin’ lef’ by the time you was done helpin’ me. No, chile, I don’t want none o’ yo’ help. I never see sech a boy for eatin’, in all my bawn days. Ter-morrer is the twenty-third o’ December, an’ Miss Ulla’s weddin’-day; an’, if I’m spar’d, I’m jest gwine ter fix every thing by myself, widout *nobody’s* help” —

George and Julian, knowing from experience that Cinthy’s monologues were interminable, beat a hasty retreat.

Skip lingered among the sweets, getting a crumb here and there, until Homoselle peeped in to give a smile of encouragement to Cinthy and to see how she was getting on. Then his cousin took him in hand for a long farewell-talk, which was of so tender a charac-

ter that Skip sniffled a good deal, and said he felt as if Homo was going to die instead of being married. After this her father claimed her. Thus the last day was broken up into bits, flitting from one sweet housewifely duty to another, until evening.

When the family were assembled in the drawing-room for tea, Mrs. Dinwiddie, looking more charming than ever in silk and soft lace, said to Homoselle, "You look tired, dear: shall I pour out tea for you?"

"Not this evening, thank you, auntie. To-morrow I am going to let you do every thing. But to-night I want to help you all once round before I abdicate."

"What is that about abdicating?" asked Phil, who had just come in, with George and Julian, from a long tramp in the snow, and was warming his fingers at the fire. "If you are going to abdicate, let us have a speech. No queen ever resigned her sceptre without a speech."

"The queen's speech is generally made for her, and I appoint you to make mine," said Homoselle, dropping sugar in her father's cup.

"Wait until I am thawed out, then," rubbing his hands.

"By all means," chimed in George Dinwiddie, whose red nose and ears testified to the temperature without. "Let us have something hot first, and the speech afterwards."

"Yes, indeed," said Bertie: "the tea will spoil with waiting, and I dare say one of Phil's speeches will be all the better for being kept."

Everybody laughed.

"You see, Bertie is never backward in *her* speeches," said Mr. Despard.

"Boys, where have you been in this weather?" asked Mrs. Dinwiddie: "your hands and faces look frost-bitten."

"Ask Mr. Roy, mamma: he took us a long tramp to an old barn of a church," said George.

"Was it the haunted church?" asked Skip, looking up quickly from his contemplation of the tea-waiter and its contents.

"Yes, the haunted church; and, by the by, we made a discovery," said Phil.

"We, indeed! I like that," said Julian. "It was I who made the discovery."

"Tell us about it, my son," said his mother.

"Why, George proposed to make a fire; and I tried to pull down some of the old wainscot for kindling-wood."

"It seems to me, that, in this case, the end did not justify the means," interposed Mr. Berkeley with one of his grave smiles.

"I did not think of that until afterwards," said Julian with a shy, boyish laugh. "But, to my surprise, a part of the wainscot came off so easily that I was sure it had been taken down before, and put back again. Behind it was a quantity of" —

"Skeletons?" interrupted Skip.

"Not exactly; but arms, — old muskets, pistols, and the like."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Mr. Despard and Mr. Dinwiddie in a breath.

"Yes," said Phil, looking round to assure himself that the servants were not in the room : " the church must have served as an armory for the negroes when they were contemplating an insurrection."

"Oh, please don't speak of it!" said Homoselle from behind the tea-urn.

"Yes, let us talk of something else," said Mrs. Dinwiddie quickly : " here comes Dick with hot cakes."

The conversation turned easily into other channels. The old drawing-room, bright with firelight and the mellow radiance of many candles, was soon filled with the pleasant murmur of soft Southern voices in animated discussion of more cheerful subjects. These were not far to seek on the eve of a wedding, and with the Christmas festival close at hand. Everybody was happy in the anticipation of Homoselle's bright future ; but still it was her last evening in the home of her girlhood, and everybody was conscious of the solemnity associated with a last time. The mirth of the little company was mingled with tenderness, and their laughter was often akin to tears.

"Come, Mr. Roy, your speech," said George, when the party was breaking up for the night.

"Sure enough ! I had forgotten," said Phil, taken aback for a moment.

"Let me give the text," said Mr. Despard, with swimming eyes, as Homoselle, kissing him, said, "Good-night, papa, good-night."

"Let it be 'a good daughter.'"

"If we have a text, then the speech must be a sermon ; and I could not do better than to pass it on to our parson," said Phil.

"I could preach no sermon half so eloquent as her father's love," said Mr. Berkeley, his eyes filling too.

"Oh, this is too much!" said Phil, with an attempt at gayety. "My speech was to have been all about 'perfidious Albion,' who, having failed in her attempt to deprive us of our liberties, sends emissaries to capture our daughters."

"I beg your pardon," said Homoselle, laughing and escaping: "it was not a capture, but a surrender."

She disappeared amid a storm of applause and "good-nights."

The morrow came, cold, calm, and brilliant. The snow had ceased falling, and the sun shone out in unclouded splendor. Everybody was glad to hail the bright morning with the old proverb, "Blessed is the bride that the sun shines on."

The wedding took place before twelve o'clock, in accordance with Halsey's desire to be married within English canonical hours. It was, because of Major Carter's recent death, a quiet affair, without the customary gayety attendant on a country wedding in Virginia at that period.

Only the near neighbors and intimate friends of the family were present, when, on the stroke of the appointed hour, Halsey, with Homoselle on his arm, quietly entered the drawing-room, and stood before Mr. Berkeley to be married. The murmur that greeted this unprecedented punctuality, and the unexpectedly beautiful vision of satin and lace, was scarcely hushed by the solemn opening of the service.

The folding-doors through which the young couple

had entered were left open, that the crowd of servants who had gathered in the hall "to see Miss Ulla married" might be gratified. Their dark faces and many-colored Sunday clothing made a fine background to the fair girl in her shining bridal robes.

It was one of those indescribably pretty and touching scenes of which the old picturesque Southern life was full, and which have passed away forever.

Halsey's manner of simple earnestness in getting married, as in every thing else, relieved him of much of the incongruity inseparable from a bridegroom's position; modern bridal honors being about as becoming to a man as the wreath of laurel above Dante's grave, ascetic face.

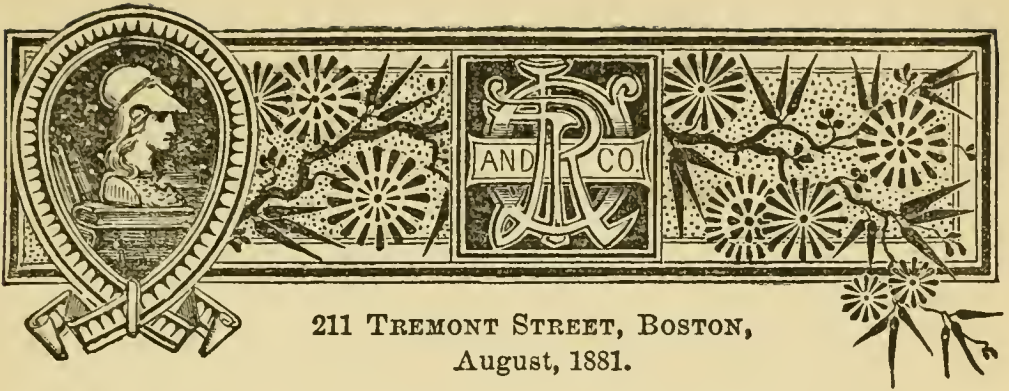
When the short, simple service that made them man and wife was over, and the congratulations had all been made, the wedding-breakfast eaten, and the satin gown exchanged for a travelling costume, Halsey and Homoselle drove to Westover, which henceforth was to be their home.

As Homoselle sank back into the luxurious depths of the carriage, she said, —

"What beautiful, high-stepping horses! Are they ours?"

"Yours, dear. You know, when we were building our *château en Espagne*, you bargained for high steppers and fine stabling."


"So I did. And to think that they are not in Spain, after all, but on good solid Virginian *terra-firma*!"



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